

Video Watchdog®

the Perfectionist's
Guide to
Fantastic Video

No. 17 \$5.50
May / June 1993



Face to Face
with

Reggie Nalder

JEKYLL & HYDE
The Silent Years

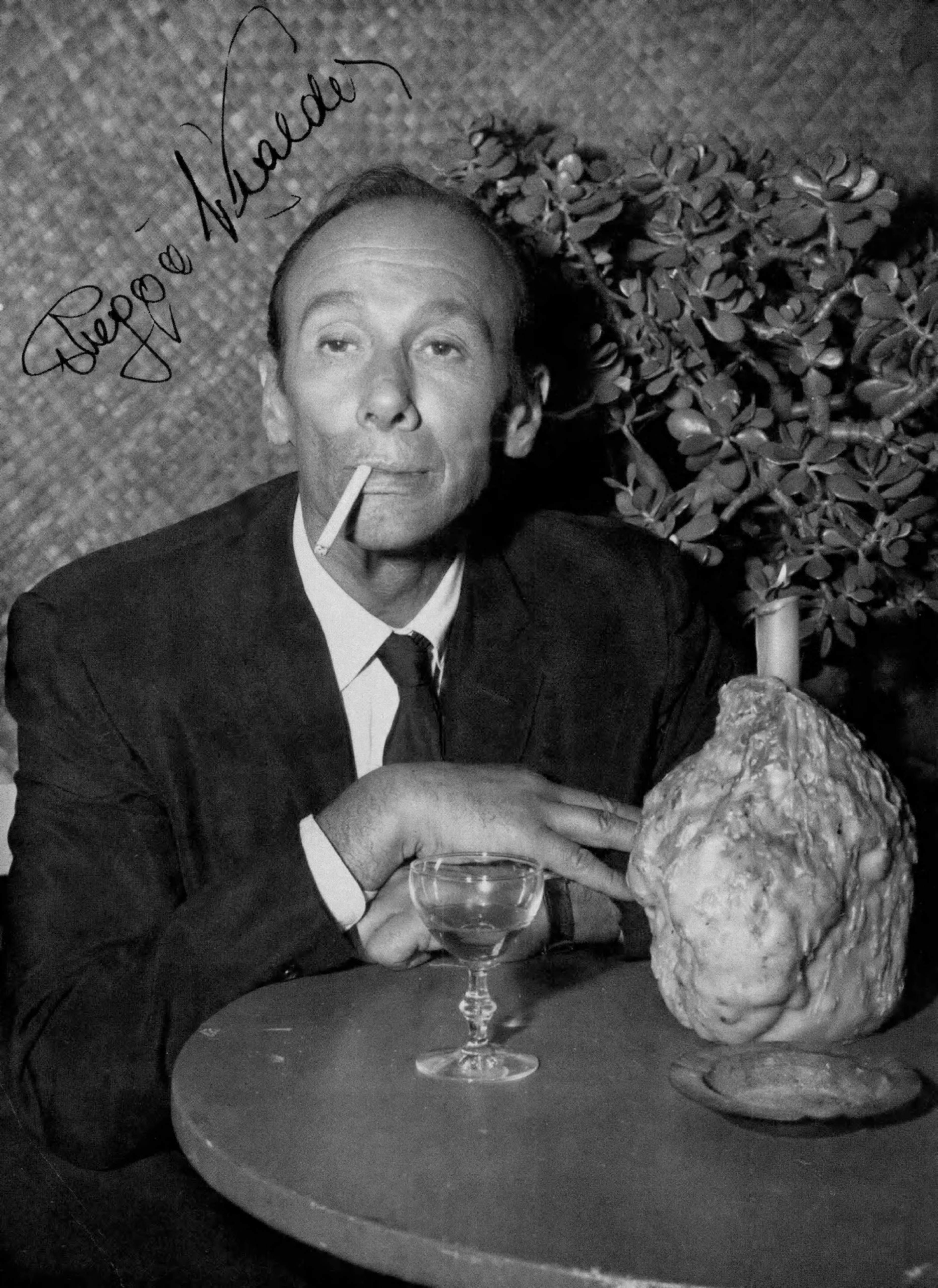
ON THE AIR
The Lost Episodes

RARITIES • RETITLINGS • RESTORATIONS

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Peppino Kallde



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BATEMAN: *Maybe if a man looks ugly, he does ugly things.*
VOLLIN: *You are saying something profound...*

—THE RAVEN (1935)

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KENNEL

PETER BLUMENSTOCK is the co-author of *OBSESSION: THE FILMS OF JESS FRANCO*, a fully-illustrated, English-language book recently published by Videodröm and Selbstverlag Frank Trebbin.

DAVID DEL VALLE was recently interviewed for an episode of *BIOGRAPHY* devoted to Vincent Price, which will air on the Arts & Entertainment Network this summer.

G. MICHAEL DOBBS is the editor and co-publisher of *ANIMATO!*, The Animation Fan's Magazine (17 Spruce Street, Springfield MA 01105; \$12.00/4 issues \$16.00 outside USA). The current issue celebrates 60 years of Popeye in Animation.

PAUL M. JENSEN is the author of *THE CINEMA OF FRITZ LANG* and *BORIS KARLOFF AND HIS FILMS*. A member of the Speech and Theater Department at the State University of New York at Oneonta, his writing has appeared in such publications as *FILM COMMENT*, *PHANTASMA*, and *FILMFAX*.

TIM LUCAS wrote the Introduction to *OBSESSION: THE FILMS OF JESS FRANCO* and was

interviewed for A&E's forthcoming Vincent Price episode of *BIOGRAPHY*.

SIMONE ROMANO is currently writing "Vampyros Lesbos," an article about lesbian vampire films, to be published in the catalog of the forthcoming Gay Film Festival in Turin, Italy.

ERIK SULEV contributed to the special "Family Values" issue of *BRUTARIAN*, and is currently preparing an article about Ringo Lam for *ASIAN TRASH CINEMA*, and another about Femi Benussi for *EUROPEAN TRASH CINEMA*. He and the lovely Monica Weber will be married in July.

BRIAN THOMAS is an accomplished comics artist and animator, whose most recent work includes a comics adaptation of *TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES 3*. He also provided the interior illustrations for *THE VIDEO WATCHDOG BOOK*.

STANLEY WIATER was Master of Ceremonies at this year's Horror Writers of America Convention. He and Stephen R. Bissette recently completed a book of interviews with maverick comic artists and writers, to be published by Donald Fine Publishers.

VW THANKS:

Forrest J. Ackerman, Lucas Balbo, Peter Beckman, Bender Goldman and Helper (Nicole Silverstein), Martine Beswick, Stephen R. Bissette, Ron Borst, Cincinnati Enquirer (Joe DeChick), Cinefear Video (Keith Crocker), Cineglobe C/FP Home Video (Jennifer Ion, Howard Rabkin), Hazel Court, Joe Dante, FoxVideo (Lewis Lagrone), Fox Lorber Video (Dana Kornbluth), David F. Friedman—The Thief of Babylon, Grove Press, Curtis Harrington, Graf Haufen, Hemdale Home Video (Tim Waters), Eric Hoffman, Image Entertainment (Garrett Lee), Jane Jaffin, Bill Kelley, Mark Kermode, Christian Kessler, Charles Kilgore, Bruce Kimmel, Vincent Kralyevich, Craig Ledbetter, Don May, MCA Universal Home Video (Maria LaMagra), McFarland and Company, Harriet Medin, Milestone Film & Video (Dennis Doros, Amy Heller), Craig Miller, New Horizons Home Video (Michelle Borkowski), Reptilichris, Paul M. Sammon, Joe Sarno, James Singer, Sinister Cinema (Greg Luce), Something Weird Video (Mike Vraney), Barbara Steele, Sam Stetson, George Stover, Alan Upchurch, USA Today (Susan Wloszczyna), Video Search of Miami (Tom Weissner), The Voyager Company (Liz Collumb, Wendy Dwyer), Warner Reprise Video (Alisse Kingsley), our contributors, distributors, subscribers, correspondents... and especially MR. DWIGHT L. GRELL for the loan and use of photos from the personal collection of Reggie Nalder!

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THE WATCHDOG BARKS



VIDEO WATCHDOG has always been dedicated to the preservation of fantastic films on video and recovering lost or overlooked information about them. This issue spotlights a number of different recoveries.

Our cover story is devoted to Reggie Nalder—the Austrian character actor best known as the Albert Hall assassin in Alfred Hitchcock's **THE MAN WHO KNEW TOO MUCH** (1956). In the past, many have tried to chronicle his contribution to the cinema but have given up, finding the myriad mysteries of his life and career too impenetrable. For awhile, it seemed that Nalder's 1991 death would preserve those secrets forever. Fortunately, David Del Valle—who worked for a time as Reggie's agent—was able to locate Dwight Grell, the actor's closest friend and beneficiary. Reggie willed all of his personal memorabilia to Dwight, who has graciously allowed us to publish several rare photos in this issue, for the first time anywhere. The oldest pictures show us a Reggie Nalder we've never known—a handsome young stage actor, a spirited cabaret dancer—taken years before the disfigurement that turned the tide of his career toward cinematic villainy. They also recover some long-buried truths that very nearly slipped through the fingers of film scholarship.

Paul M. Jensen's article "Dr. Jekylls & Mr. Hydes: The Silent Years" coincides with another recovery—namely the first-time availability, on videocassette, of *all* the American silent film adaptations of Robert Louis Stevenson's novella. Paul's article discusses how the cinema has creatively strayed from Stevenson's original text, reinventing its archetypal characters with each new actor's interpretation of these classic roles. If you've never read **THE STRANGE CASE OF DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE**, it may surprise you to discover how much of this seemingly exhausted work remains to be explored... and how much that we tend to assume began in Stevenson, actually started in the movies. (Did you know that Jekyll's moonlighting in hospital charity wards—a fixture of most movies based on the tale—was first improvised in the otherwise forgotten 1913 version, starring King Baggot?) This survey—which concludes in our next issue with a definitive look at

Rouben Mamoulian's 1931 masterpiece (the first sound version)—not only restores these early films to their proper attention, it more importantly enables us to recover *our* perspective, as their contemporary audience.

Last but not least among this issue's recoveries is VIDEO WATCHDOG #2. Since our 16th issue hit the stands with its essay on David Lynch's **TWIN PEAKS: FIRE WALK WITH ME**, we've received an extraordinary number of calls and letters demanding a reprint of our out-of-print second issue ("The Annotated TWIN PEAKS"). Realizing that very few of you own VW #2—which now fetches up to \$50 at auction—Donna and I have decided that it's high time we helped to complete your collections. We have reprinted a limited quantity of VW #2, which is now available *from our mail-order department only*; they can be bought, while supplies last, at the back issue rate of \$10 (US) / \$11 (Overseas). If you've already invested in an original copy, please note that we've protected your investment by printing the cover of this facsimile "in glorious Black & White" (to borrow MGM/UA Home Video's phrase), minus the orchid tint that graced the First Edition; otherwise, this reprint is identical. Some of you may see the wisdom of investing in a reading copy, and preserving your well-thumbed original in plastic.

Also by Popular Demand: Video Watchdog will be making it easier for those of you over 21 to obtain a copy of the new German import book, **OBSESSION: THE FILMS OF JESS FRANCO**. Written by VW correspondents Lucas Balbo and Peter Blumenstock with Christian Kessler, this lavishly-illustrated hardcover contains a Foreword by Howard Vernon, a career-length Franco interview and filmography (fact-checked by Franco himself), interviews with several of Franco's repertory players, and an Introduction and Appreciation by Yours Truly. **OBSESSION** also features a selection of unbelievable color photos, yet costs about as much as a McFarland book without any color. Still trying to resist? To sweeten the deal, the first 100 copies of **OBSESSION** sold by VW will contain an *exclusive autographed bookplate*, signed by each of the main contributors (and maybe a surprise signature or two...)! These will be going fast, so put down that whip and reserve your copy now!

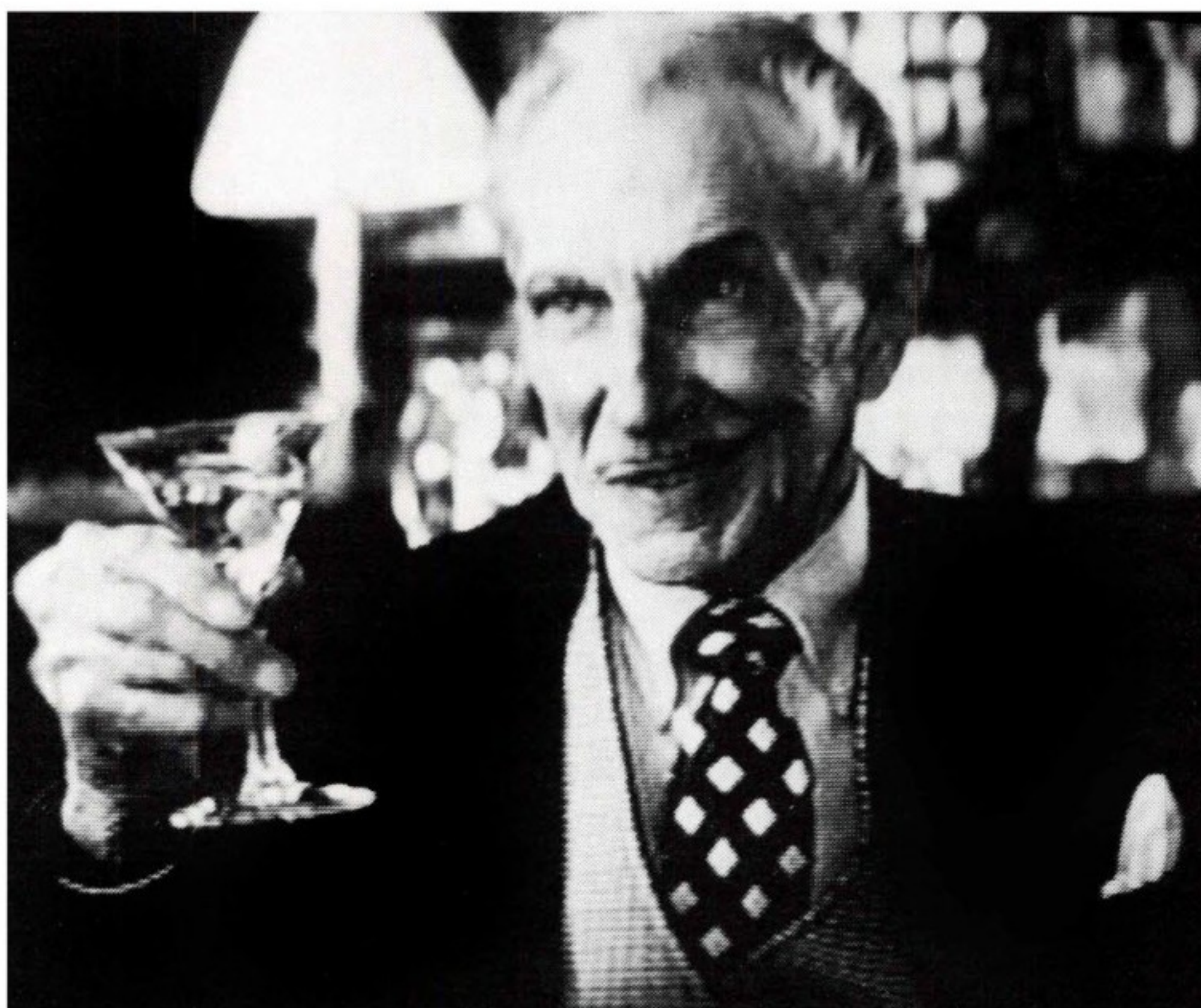
..... Tim Lucas

The PRICE of Recognition



WERE YOU as surprised as we were to see Vincent Price's cameo performance in TNT's "Screenworks" presentation of **THE HEART OF JUSTICE** last February? He had two brief scenes as "Mr. Shaw," a self-described "charming old fart" who has the distinction of being the last person to speak with novelist Austin Blair (Dennis Hopper) before he is gunned down in the street—by the real-life protagonist (Dermot Mulroney) of his latest best-selling "fiction." Scripted by award-winning playwright Keith Reddin and directed by Bruno Baretto (**DONA FLOR AND HER TWO HUSBANDS**), the stylish *film noir* also starred Eric Stoltz and Jennifer Connelly.

Indeed, in recent months, Vincent Price has become the subject of some long overdue, but most welcome, recognition. In March, FoxVideo released Otto Preminger's **LAURA** (1944) on video—unavailable for a dozen years since its first and only release on the Magnetic Video label. That same month, Cinemax paid tribute to the beloved actor with a "Starring Vincent Price" film festival, which included **HOUSE OF WAX** (1953), **HOUSE ON HAUNTED HILL** (1958), **THE FLY** (1958), and **RETURN OF THE FLY** (1959). The films were further complemented with contemporary interview "bites" recently videotaped at VP's Hollywood home.



Vincent Price as Shaw in TNT's "Screenworks" presentation, **THE HEART OF JUSTICE**.

Happily, even better things are still to come. Director Tim Burton—whose affection for the Host of Haunted Hill has been obvious from the time of his first short film, **VINCENT** (1983), to the more recent **EDWARD SCISSORHANDS** (1990)—is reportedly at work on a documentary entitled **CONVERSATIONS WITH VINCENT**, a celebration of the actor's life and career. No release date has been set.

More immediate gratification is due from cable's Arts & Entertainment Network, whose long-running series **BIOGRAPHY** is devoting an upcoming episode to the Debonair Dean of Delirium.

The one-hour program will feature rare clips from VP's film and television appearances, including David Del Valle's never-before-seen **SINISTER IMAGE** interview, which was the basis of our Q&A transcript in VW #11. Ill health prevented Vincent from participating in the program himself, but on-screen tributes will be provided by Christopher Lee, Dennis Hopper, Roger Corman, Hazel Court, Joan Rivers, Gordon Hessler, John Waters, David Del Valle, and (yours truly) Tim Lucas! **BIOGRAPHY** airs on A&E Wednesday nights at 10:00 PM EST, so watch your cable listings for the summer airdate.

On May 27, Vincent Price—along with colleagues Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee—will be celebrating a birthday. Vincent's will be Birthday #82 and, on this occasion, we all send him our love and well-wishes.

Lust and Fiend

Something Weird Video's Mike Vraney has recently had an extraordinary run of luck, uncovering literally dozens of horror and exploitation films long believed to be lost. To accommodate and accentuate these treasures, Something Weird will introduce four new video series in May.

"Dave Friedman's Roadshow Rarities" collects literally hundreds of the rarest treasures of the Golden Age of Exploitation, fresh from the troves of the Thief of Babylon himself, David F. Friedman. Launching the series in grand style are Irving Klaw's **TEASERAMA** and **VARIETEASE** (both 1955), two legendary, burlesque house classics starring Tempest Storm, Lily St. Cyr, and the one and only *Betty Page*! After decades of fruitless searching by burly-q enthusiasts, it has been widely speculated that these films were either irretrievably lost or non-existent... that is, until a recent **LIFESTYLES OF THE RICH AND FAMOUS** profile of Ms. Page reminded Friedman that the original 35mm color negatives of *both* films had been acquired by Louis Sonney in the 1950s; as such, they were part of the film collection deposited under Friedman and partner Dan Sonney's names at the UCLA Film Archives.

Betty's fans are having a hard time believing it. "Ever since we announced these upcoming releases in our catalog, people have been calling and telling us that we're crazy, that these films don't exist," Vraney told us. "I used to argue with them, but now I just sit

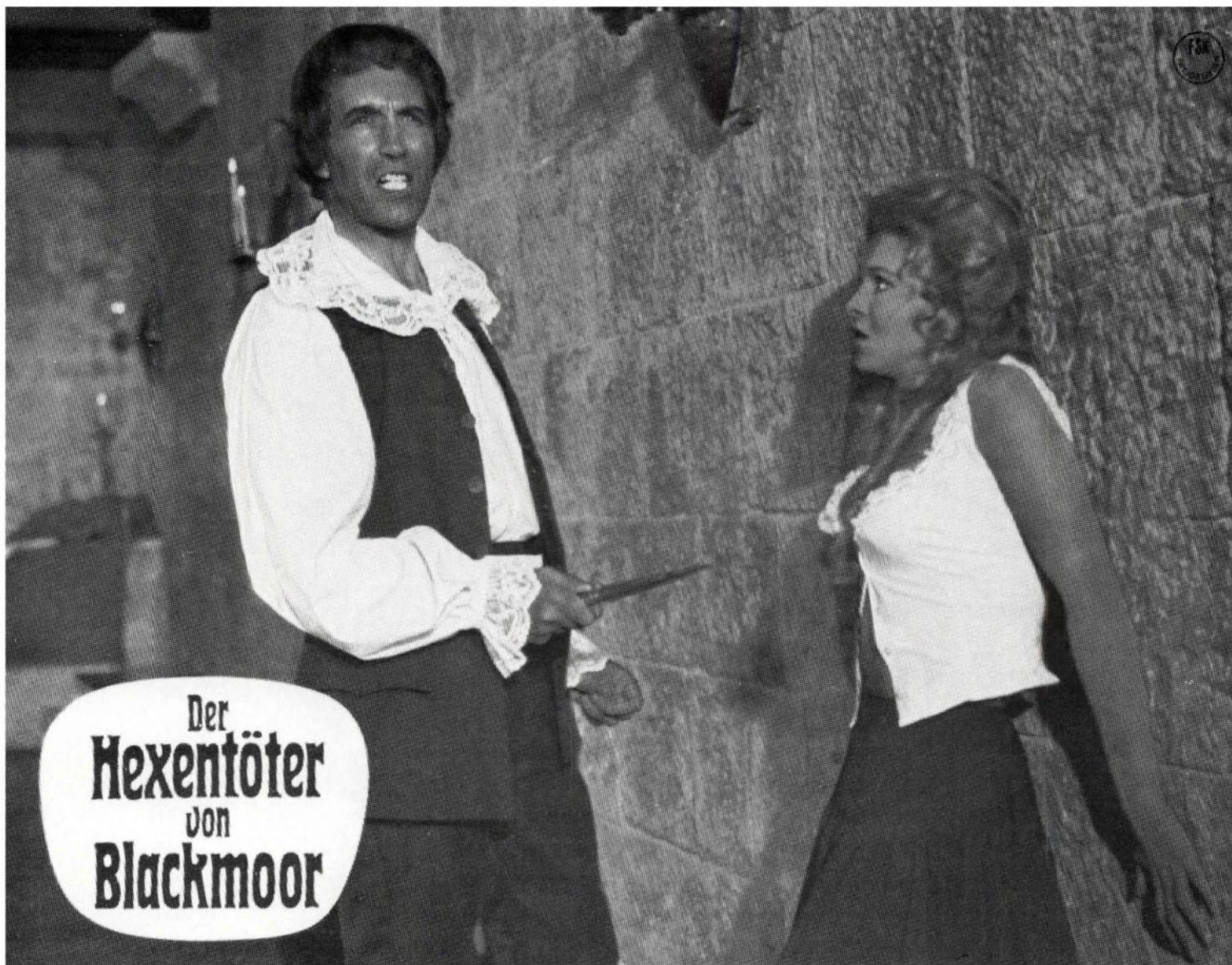


*Tempest Storm and Betty Page bump and grind their way out of the vaults in Something Weird Video's **TEASERAMA**.*

back and smile. Once these things get out, they'll be convinced soon enough. These transfers are *broadcast* quality."

Future "Roadshow Rarities" releases include Dwain Esper's **MARIJUANA** (with approximately 5m of additional nudity not found in current public domain versions), **GUILTY PARENTS**, **CHILD BRIDE**, **BECAUSE OF EVE** (one of the earliest "birth of a baby" movies), and many more of the Louis Sonney productions glimpsed in Friedman's popular **SEX AND BUTTERED POPCORN** video compilation (Kit Parker Video; VW 9:17).

Another promising Something Weird imprint is "Frank Henenlotter's Sexy Shockers," in which the *auteur* of the **BASKET CASE** trilogy hosts an avalanche of eerie erotica. Among the titillating terrors in this series are Fritz Böttger's **THE HORRORS OF SPIDER ISLAND**, Barry Mahon's **THE BEAST THAT KILLED WOMEN**, the infamous shockumentaries **MONDO BALARDO** (narrated by Boris Karloff) and **ECCO** (narrated by George Sanders), **THE CURIOUS DR. HUMPP**, **SCREAM OF THE BUTTERFLY**, and many others. Almost every one of these films was considered lost until this



The lecherous Judge Jeffreys (Christopher Lee) sentences an uncooperative wench (Maria Rohm) to the dungeons in Jess Franco's *NIGHT OF THE BLOOD MONSTER*.

surprise announcement, and Something Weird Video is making their release even sweeter by striking many of these titles *from their original negatives!!* One such case is Jess Franco's legendary **THE AWFUL DR. ORLOF**, which includes two nude scenes taken from the negative of **THE HORRIBLE DR. ORLOF**—a forgotten *uncut* variant of the film, originally distributed to “Adults Only” theaters!

Something Weird has also made arrangements with Brazilian cult director José Mojica Marins (aka *Zé de Caixao*, “Coffin Joe”) to distribute authorized, subtitled prints of his garish, taboo-breaking horror films. The first four titles in the series will be **AT MIDNIGHT I'LL GET YOU**, **THE**

STRANGE WORLD OF COFFIN JOE, **THE BEAST AWAKENS**, and **ABNORMAL DELIRIUM**.

Finally, “Johnny Legend’s Untamed Video” finds Mr. Sleazemania presenting a wide variety of drive-in and delinquency fare, including **POT**, **PARENTS AND POLICE** (a 1971 feature starring Legend himself as a homicidal hophead), **COTTON-PICKIN’ CHICKEN PICKERS** (believe it or not, a David Puttnam production!), **LOST LONELY AND VIOIOUS**, **TEENAGE GANG DEBS**, **THE SPEED LOVERS**, **CURFEW BREAKERS**, and new copies of Edward D. Wood Jr.’s **JAILBAIT** and **THE VIOLENT YEARS** struck from their original negatives.

Because of the rarity and

vulnerability of these items, Something Weird will introduce a recurring onscreen logo on select titles, including **TEASERAMA** and **VARIETEASE**. “It will be a little SWV in the corner, not big enough to distract anybody, but just noticeable enough to brand the film as our property,” Vraney explained. “It won’t be onscreen the whole time, just briefly, once or twice. I hate to do it, but in the end it will ensure the quality of the product by discouraging bootleggers.”

All Something Weird Video titles—including the “Lost Films of Betty Page”—are priced at \$20.00 each. Add \$3.00 (P&H) for the first tape, \$1.50 for each additional tape. You must be 18 years of age to order.

Jess is More

We've been noting with interest that VIDEO WATCHDOG's devotion to "Rarities, Retitlings, and Restorations" has begun to influence the world of mail-order video.

Tom Weisser's Video Search of Miami is now offering a "restored version" of Jess Franco's **A VIRGIN AMONG THE LIVING DEAD** (1971)—a surreal horror film originally released by Wizard Video, in a heavily censored (87m 57s) TV print. VSoM's patchwork reconstruction is composed of footage taken from the Spanish video release *Testamento Diabolico* ("Diabolic Oath"), the Italian *Una vergine fra i morti viventi*, and the French variants *Holocauste de Zombi* ("Zombie Holocaust") and *Christina, Princesse de l'Erotisme* ("Christina, Princess of Eroticism"). It makes for very odd viewing—we jump from English footage with Spanish subtitles to Italian footage with English subtitles to French footage without dialogue!—but it's remarkable odd viewing, particularly for its restoration of some important shots that were annoyingly opaqued in Wizard's version.

In an introductory crawl, VSoM claims that 35m of deleted material has been reinserted into **VIRGIN**, but this isn't correct math; actually, their 103m 16s restoration is 15m 19s longer than the Wizard tape. (Of course, when footage is being culled from Italian PAL and French SECAM sources, any discussion of an NTSC running time is less than academic.) Purists may also argue with the fact that the tape includes additional scenes not shot by Franco—most notably a recurring "living dead" dream sequence, directed by Jean Rollin—but the fact remains that this version collects everything

that was ever included in this production.

VSoM is also offering a similar reconstruction of Franco's **THE BARE-BREASTED COUNTESS** (1973), previously issued here in two different versions—Force Video's **EROTIKILL** and Luna Video's **THE LOVES OF IRINA**. Assembled from two European prints—one English with Dutch

subtitles (letterboxed at 1.75:1), the other in German with original English subtitles (letterboxed at 2.25:1)—VSoM's 108m 14s tape collects on one cassette virtually all the available material from the film's erotic horror (*La Comtesse Noire*), softcore (*La Comtesse aux Sens Nus*), and hardcore (*Les Avaleuses*) variants. This version not only features the oral

ERRATA

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>14:18 CANNIBAL GIRLS was not Ivan Reitman's first film. That distinction belongs to FOXY LADY, an action film that played in a few Canadian cities in the fall of 1971.</p> <p>16:3 Virgil was a Roman poet, not Greek.</p> <p>16:7 The proprietor in the caption for TASTE THE BLOOD OF DRACULA is actually Russell Hunter, not Lindsay Kemp. Kemp played the proprietor of the Green Man Inn which provided Edward Woodward with temporary accommodation in THE WICKER MAN.</p> <p>16:8 Whether or not MCA Universal knows about On Line Video's BLOOD THIRST being a retitling of SALEM'S LOT: THE MOVIE is irrelevant. SALEM'S LOT is a Warner Home Video release.</p> | <p>16:11 The daughter posing with father Dario is not Asia Argento (featured in DEMONS 2: THE NIGHTMARE CONTINUES, THE CHURCH, and the forthcoming TRAUMA), but rather Fiore Argento, her older sister. Also in the photo: Duccio Tessari's daughter Fiorenza (left).</p> <p>16:21 Incorrect production dates were provided for Tsui Hark's THE BUTTERFLY MURDERS and WE ARE GOING TO EAT YOU; the correct dates are, respectively, 1979 and 1984.</p> <p>16:65 Though Pioneer's Special Edition laserdiscs of Ray Harryhausen's films may be difficult to find on store shelves, we are told that they are still in print and shall remain so at least through the end of 1993.</p> |
|--|---|

[Thanks to Nick Burton, Joseph Caporiccio, John Charles, Neil Kerr, Michael Klossner, Sandy Robertson, Simone Romano, Erik Sulev and Brett Taylor.]

sex footage deleted from both domestic versions, but also Lina Romay's complete encounter with two S&M cultists (Alice Arno and Monica Swinn), a scene butchered beyond all sense in US prints. The German hardcore footage is only fair in quality, but the bulk of the transfer looks quite good, and the tape serves as a useful complement to the two domestic editions, neither of which is remotely as complete.

Furthermore, Keith Crocker's Cinefear Video (40 South Brush Drive, Valley Stream, NY 11581) is offering a special collector's edition of Franco's 1969 witch-hunting opus, **NIGHT OF THE BLOOD MONSTER** (\$33.00 ppd). In addition to a very good-quality transfer of a pan-scan domestic print (80m 54s), the tape includes approximately 11m of "censored scenes" culled from the German version, *Der Hexentoter von Blackmoor* ("The Witch-Killer of Blackmoor"). This surprisingly rough footage—which includes executioner Howard Vernon's torturing of suspected witch Margaret Lee, other violent dungeon doings, and a nude Maria Rohm being explicitly caressed by a roving hand (supposedly belonging to Judge Jeffreys, despite Christopher Lee's refusal to participate in the scene)—is attractively letterboxed at 2.25:1, and shows exactly how much the pan-scan version detracts from Manuel Merino's widescreen cinematography. While the addition of these scenes is a great boon, one wishes that Cinefear had also included some of the German version's "alternate scenes," as most of the clothed love scenes found in the domestic edition were also filmed nude for the continental release.

Cinefear's tape prompted us to examine two other versions of this film: Holland's **THE BLOODY JUDGE** (in English, with Dutch

subtitles) and *Le Trône de Feu*, available on the French label American Video. The Dutch version is only moderately letterboxed at 1.70:1 and runs 85m in NTSC; the French version is more generously framed at 2.20, and runs 5m longer in NTSC. While the French version would appear to be statistically more complete, *Trône* is actually lacking the instances of nudity which appear fleetingly in **JUDGE**, and lingeringly in *Hexentoter*. Additionally, the French version ends abruptly with an imprisoned Jeffreys awaiting his execution, segueing from Bruno Nicolai's wrenchingly tragic theme song to disco music! All other versions take the scene a little further, with Jeffreys succumbing to a heart attack before Leo Genn can lead him to the gallows.

Mo' Derek

Fans of British filmmaker Derek Jarman—whose **EDWARD II** was recently reviewed in these pages [VW 15:13]—may want to check out the new, digitally-processed, music video collection **THE SMITHS: THE COMPLETE PICTURE** (Warner Reprise Video #3-38330, \$19.98). In addition to Jarman's winningly silly video for the song "Ask," the 50m compilation includes a 12m 47s experimental Jarman short entitled **THE QUEEN IS DEAD**, composed of interlocking videos for the songs "The Queen is Dead," "There is a Light (That Never Goes Out)" and "Panic" (which was prominently featured on the soundtrack of Lamberto Bava's 1986 film **DEMONS 2: THE NIGHTMARE CONTINUES**). "There is a Light" is sometimes shown on MTV, but the version found here contains female nudity and homoerotic imagery that you won't see on television.

Retitlings

AMAZONIA (Star Entertainment Laserdisc) is Mario Giriazio's **AMAZONIA—THE CATHERINE MILES STORY** (1984), released on cassette as **WHITE SLAVE** (Force Video). The bilingual disc (with English on the analog track and Chinese subtitles) features a dark, ugly transfer and is 5m shorter than the Force version.

THE ARAB CONSPIRACY (Mntx) is Richard C. Sarafian's **THE NEXT MAN** (1976), a mediocre thriller starring Sean Connery and Cornelia Sharpe. It is also available as **DOUBLE HIT**.

DEADLY NEIGHBOR (VCI Video) is Don Dohler's **FIEND** (1980), originally released by Force Video and later reissued by Prism Entertainment. The Baltimore-made film stars Don Leifert, George Stover and Elaine White.

FATAL PURSUIT (Marathon) is Al Adamson's **GIRLS FOR RENT** (1974), starring Georgina Spelvin of **THE DEVIL IN MISS JONES** infamy. It was previously available as **I SPIT ON YOUR CORPSE** (Super Video).

GO KILL AND COME BACK (Monterey) is Enzo G. Castellari's 1967 spaghetti oater *Vado... L'Ammazzo e Torno* ("I'll Go... I'll Kill Him and Come Back"). Also released domestically as **ANY GUN CAN PLAY** and **FOR A FEW BULLETS MORE**. Edd Byrnes and George Hilton star.

MEAT IS MEAT (CIC Video) is **THE MAD BUTCHER** (1972), a black comedy boosted by Victor Buono's fun performance as a



George Stover is choked by Don Leifert in this scene from *DEADLY NEIGHBOR*, a reissue by Video Communications, Inc. of Don Dohler's 1980 feature *FIEND*.

meat market proprietor whose sausages would make Sweeney Todd proud. Also released under its original title by Best Film and Video on an LP-mode double feature cassette with **FRANKENSTEIN'S CASTLE OF FREAKS** (1973).

NIGHT OF THE BLOODSUCKERS

(BFPI Video) is Cirio H. Santiago's **VAMPIRE HOOKERS** (1979), starring John Caradine, Trey Wilson and Vic Diaz (the "Dick Miller of the Philippines"). Also shown theatrically as **SENSUOUS VAMPIRES**, the film was released under its original title by Continental and Magnum Video, and retitled **TWICE BITTEN** by HQV and Ariel (UK) Video.

NO LOOKING BACK (TV Syndica-

tion) is Dennis Hopper's **OUT OF THE BLUE** (1980) an intense drama starring Hopper and Linda Manz, originally released by Media Home Entertainment.

NUCLEAR RUN (Sen Sei Productions) is Ian Barry's **CHAIN REACTION** (1980), an Aussie

thriller starring Steve Bisley (**MAD MAX**) and featuring a cameo by Mel Gibson.

RENEGADE RIDERS (Lettuce) is

an ugly, squeezed, PAL bootleg of E.G. Rowland's spaghetti western **PAYMENT IN BLOOD** (1967) starring Edd Byrnes and Guy Madison. The original Italian title is **7 Winchester per un Massacro** ("7 Winchesters for a Massacre"). E.G. Rowland is Enzo Girolami, best known to exploitation fans as Enzo G. Castellari.

ROUGH RIDERS (Marathon) is Al

Adamson's **ANGELS WILD WOMEN** (1972), starring Ross Hagen and Regina Carroll. Released under its original title by Super Video.

SHE DEVILS OF THE SS (CIC) is

Erwin C. Dietrich's **Elne Armee Gretchen** ("Frauleins in Uniform"). This 1973 sex comedy is also known as **FRAULEINS WITHOUT UNIFORM**. The CIC edition is letterboxed and is the complete 96m version [reviewed in VW 12:20-21].

ADDRESSES

SINISTER CINEMA

P.O. Box 4369
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(503) 773-6860

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SHOWDOWN (Platinum Productions) is Albert Band's Italian western **THE TRAMPLERS** (1966), starring Joseph Cotten and Gordon Scott. The actual onscreen title is **SHOWDOWN AT DAWN**.

—John Charles, Michael Ferguson
(CINE-FACTS), George Stover.



Video Around the World

Russian Treasures, Drive-In Pleasures

A NOTE ON TIMINGS

The timings listed for the following NTSC tapes reflect only the length of the film itself, and do not include such ephemera as video company logos, FBI warnings, supplementary trailers, or MPAA ratings certificates. The only exceptions to this rule are those films in which the soundtrack is first heard while the distributor's logo is still onscreen.

USA

By Tim Lucas

AN ANGEL FOR SATAN

1966, Video Search of Miami,
\$27.90 ppd., 82m 11s

Produced at the end of the "Golden Age" of Italian genre filmmaking (1957-66), this film—never theatrically distributed in the United States—is one of Barbara Steele's best and most sophisticated horror vehicles. She stars as Harriet Montebruno, a young heiress who returns from England to her Italian villa on the day that a statue of her lookalike, Madelena, is recovered from a lake. As a renowned artist (Anthony Steffen) toils at the sculpture's restoration, freeing it from the ravages of time, the virginal Harriet experiences changes in her behavior that suggest possession by Madelena, a sexual predator sentenced to death 200 years earlier as a witch. In marked contrast to one's expectations of such material, director Camillo Mastrocinque—who previously helmed the Le Fanu adaptation **TERROR IN THE CRYPT** [*La cripta e l'incubo*, "The Crypt and the Incubus," 1964]—denies the viewer almost every opportunity

of taking salacious pleasure in Steele's sexual mischief, focusing instead on the devastating tragedies she leaves in her wake. Also elevating this production well above the norm is the narrative complexity of its final reel, in which the supernatural explanation of events is dismissed... only to reassert itself in a surge of precarious triumph. The script is based on a story by Luigi Emanuelle, obviously influenced by Prosper Merimée's story *LA VENUS D'ILE*, which was the basis of Mario Bava's last directorial achievement, *La Venere d'Ille* (1978,

KEY

CC	Closed Captioned
D	Digital
HF	Hi-Fi
LB	Letterboxed
LD	Laserdisc
MA	Multiple Audio
NSR	No Suggested Retail
OP	Out of Print
S	Stereo
SS	Surround Sound



Ilmarinen (I. Voronov) forges a red horse from open flames to plow a field of deadly snakes in THE DAY THE EARTH FROZE.

also available in a subtitled version from VSoM).

Converted from an Italian source, VSoM has accurately subtitled this rather talky film in English; Steele originally spoke her lines in English, and the subtitles often match the exact words she is saying. (It should be mentioned that an English-dubbed version was theatrically released in the UK.) Due to the generational loss caused by computer subtitling, the image quality is soft but still watchable, and the frame is letterboxed at approximately 1.70:1. Bilingual or budget-conscious viewers are referred to Sinister Cinema's version (#BS09, \$19.00), which is cheaper and crisper-looking, but *not* subtitled.

THE DAY THE EARTH FROZE

1959/63, Sinister Cinema F019, \$19.00 ppd., 67m 16s

Lurking behind this absurdly misleading, futuristic title is the American version of Alexander Ptushko's ravishing fairy tale **Sampo** (1959), condensed from its original 99m length by anonymous employees of Roger Corman's company, The Filmgroup. The story, based on a tale from Elias Lonnrott's **KALEVALA**, tells of Lemminkainen the Woodcutter (Andris Oshin) and Ilmarinen the Blacksmith (I. Voronov), who must forge a "Sampo"—a magic mill of earthy riches—for the evil witch Louhi (A. Orochko), in order to save the fair maiden Annikki (Eve

Kivi) from bondage. With Annikki returned to them, the woodcutter reneges on the deal and destroys the Sampo (a pivotal sequence cut from the US version!), for which Louhi steals the sun, dooming the peaceful village of Kalevala to perpetual Arctic winds and darkness. Arguably Ptushko's finest film, this is one of the great hidden treasures of 1950s fantasy cinema, and strongly recommended to admirers of Jean Cocteau and Terry Gilliam.

Sinister Cinema's tape represents a 100% improvement over Shock Theater Video's grainy, once-exclusive copy [VW 9:40], restoring the sumptuousness of its color photography, and the magnificent detail of its mythic settings. Despite Corman's shenanigans—

which extended to distributing the film under cover of "Renaissance Films," and covering one or two of the sloppier edits with squeezed, anamorphic shots filmed at Big Sur for **THE TERROR** (1963)!—the beauty and imagination of this important film remain unviolated. The onscreen credits are the usual Filmgroup subterfuge, with "Directed by Gregg Sebelious" a particular annoyance. For more information, see the appropriate pages of Alan Upchurch's groundbreaking Ptushko survey, "Russkaya Fantastika" [VW 9:37-40].

DRACULA RISING

1992, New Horizons Home Video
#NH00449, HF/S/SS, \$89.98,
79m 54s

The name "Dracula" isn't uttered once in this pathetic Roger Corman production, which finds Theresa (Stacey Travis), a young Los Angeles artist—whose work reflects an attraction to supernatural themes—hired by mysterious

art collector (Doug Wert) to restore a damaged portrait in an ancient Romanian monastery. Also present is Vlad (Christopher Atkins), the undead son of Vlad the Impaler (Zahari Vatanov), who recognizes Theresa as the reincarnation of a lover burned at the stake 500 years ago. Scripted by Rodman Flender and Daniella Purcell, this sentimental dirge makes surprisingly few concessions to its elected genre, and most of the horrific moments on display (not to mention some of its stylistic excesses) are ideas borrowed from New Horizon's **TO SLEEP WITH A VAMPIRE** [VW 16:17-18]. The climax—set in Hell, where else?—is vintage 1963, including a **RAVEN**-like magic duel and a raid of vampire bats that owes more than a little to Hammer's **KISS OF THE VAMPIRE**. Rather than a vampire film, **DRACULA RISING** is more like an AIDS-era romantic melodrama whose preoccupation with doomed relationships leads it in some

fancifully morbid directions; perhaps not accidentally, all of the "biting" scenes are homosexual (if such a distinction can be said to exist among non-living creatures). Standing side-by-side, Vlad the Impaler—a heavy-breathing, dark-cloaked figure with a metal mask—and Vlad Junior—a blonde, boyish, surfer-type in monkish robes—bear a stupefying resemblance to Darth Vader and Luke Skywalker! Director Fred Gallo (**DEAD SPACE, THE FINISHING TOUCH**) and cinematographer Ivan Varimazov handle the horror scenes with color gels and artifice, but have marginally better luck with their pastoral 15th Century flashbacks, even if witch-burnings didn't really come into fashion till another century or two later. And the "Blood Lite" joke is unforgivable.

EVGENII BAUER

1914-15, Milestone Film & Video,
HF/S, \$29.95, 92m 36s

This seventh volume of Milestone's ten-cassette series "Early Russian Cinema" is devoted to the best work of Bauer (1865-1917) who, though active in the cinema for only five years, is now being reassessed as the most important filmmaker of pre-Soviet Russia. What has not been so readily pronounced is Bauer's startling relevance as a pioneering artist of the Macabre. **CHILD OF THE BIG CITY** [*Ditla bol'shogo goroda*, 1914] is a romantic melodrama about a wealthy man driven to ruin by the seamstress he marries. This dark parable (which features attractive sets designed by Bauer himself) is most memorable for its ghastly finale, which shows the *femme fatale* archetype alive and well long before Eugen Illes' **Alraune** (1918). The second short, **THE 1002nd RUSE** [*Tysiacha vtorala khlitrost'*, 1915; 17m 32s] is a darkly humorous look at married

Aleksandr Vyrubov mourns his late wife (N. Chernobaeva) in Evgenii Bauer's necrophilic featurette, **DAYDREAMS**.



life anticipating Thurber, about an aging husband who jealously shadows his young wife (Lina Bauer—the director's own wife, who resembles a Rubenesque "Rambling Rose") after reading a book called 1001 WOMANLY RUSES: INSTRUCTIONS FOR OLD HUSBANDS ("Compiled by Abracadabra"). Naturally, in Bauer's fundamentally misogynistic universe, the old fool's suspicions are well-founded.

What lifts this collection above mere historical curiosity, however, is the inclusion of **DAYDREAMS** [Grezy, 1915; 37m 26s], a truly major recovery for the fantastic cinema. Sergei (Aleksandr Vyrubov), a young widower haunted by memories of his dead wife Elena (N. Chernobaeva), passes her exact double on the street one afternoon. He follows her to a local theater, where he finds her playing the part of a reanimated corpse in an opera entitled ROBERT THE DEVIL. (Vyrubov's ecstatic, disruptive run toward the footlights is one of the great sick scenes of the silent cinema.) After the performance, Sergei introduces himself to the actress, Tina (Chernobaeva, of course); they begin dating and, in time, he begins dressing her in his dead wife's hand-me-downs—much as James Stewart did with Kim Novak in Hitchcock's **VERTIGO** (made almost half a century later!). Tina eventually sickens of the necrophilic underpinnings of their relationship and taunts Sergei with his keepsake braid of Elena's hair. When she refers to it as his "precious, flea-infested tuft," the blasphemy tips Sergei over the edge of madness and he strangles her with it. Based on Georges Rodenbach's forgotten novel *BRUQUES DE MORT*, **DAYDREAMS** appears to modern sensibilities to be one of the earliest films to display such a deep, thematic indebtedness to Poe.



Eva Grimaldi as the witch Anibas in *THE MASK OF SATAN*, a return to form for director Lamberto Bava.

Vyrubov (who resembles Giancarlo Giannini) is very much a tortured hero in the Vincent Price mold—we see him sauntering through his ornate retreat in a silken smoking jacket, dabbling in morbid painting; had his mansion been in flames as he strangled his lover, **DAYDREAMS** would bear a scandalous resemblance to Roger Corman's Poe series of the 1960s. Even without the conflagration, any future studies of Poe in the cinema—or **VERTIGO**, for that matter—that fail to mention this prophetic masterpiece will be egregiously incomplete. A must-see.

The prints of all three films, obtained through the British Film Institute from Moscow's Gosfilmofond archives, are of unbelievably high quality; while **THE 1002nd RUSE** contains some fleeting, patchy deterioration, **DAYDREAMS** is actually in better shape than (to pick an example out of thin air) some of Universal's "Golden Age" horror classics of the '30s and '40s. The bilingual title cards contain one or two

errors, but are attractively designed and always legible. Ian Christie's extensive liner notes (on the obverse of the cover sheet) provide a welcome education.

THE MASK OF SATAN

1990, Video Search of Miami, \$27.90 ppd., 92m 4s

This is Lamberto Bava's *La maschera del demonio*—not, as commonly reported, a remake of his father Mario Bava's **BLACK SUNDAY** (1960), but a contemporary twist on that classic's source story, Nikolay Gogol's "Vij." Four young couples on a skiing expedition accidentally disturb the glacial resting place of the witch Anibas (Eva Grimaldi). After removing a mask of spikes from the face of the dead sorceress, they are rescued by a blind priest who offers them the comforts of his sanctuary until help arrives, whereafter it becomes apparent that three of the four couples have become receptors for the evil that Anibas swore on the descendants of her inquisitors.

The fourth couple (Giovanni Guidelli and Debora Kinski)—two chaste young lovers—is gradually defined as the battleground wherein the witch's victory or defeat must ultimately be decided, as her diabolic powers tease and test the corruptibility of their flesh, faith, and spirit.

Intelligently scripted by Lamberto, Massimo De Rita (the producer of Mario's *La maschera...*) and Giorgio Stegani, this film actually owes more to Gogol than **BLACK SUNDAY** ever did; the witchly harassment of the priest, the hideous seduction-cum-transformation in the barn (expertly assisted by effects artist Sergio Stivaletti), the portrayals of giggly and mischievous evil, and the witch's demonstrations of her powers to the hero as she lay in state on her altar—are marvelously Gogolian. Only the spiked mask derives from Mario, like the bouncing ball quoted at the outset of Lamberto's **ABLADE IN THE DARK** [*La casa con la scala nel buio*, "The House with the Dark Staircase," 1981]. Elsewhere, Bava creates a more satisfying, less superficial variation on the mythos born in his **DEMONS** films, demonstrating a far greater penchant for the spiritual evil that taunts from within, than for drooling, infected, Heavy Metal miscreants. The young cast (which includes director Michele Soavi in a nothing role) has its limitations, Simon Boswell's overfamiliar synth-and-drum scores are starting to run together, and it's no **BLACK SUNDAY**... but this is Lamberto's most personal and ambitious work in the horror genre since **FROZEN TERROR** [*Macabro*, 1980]. It is also an unusual Italian horror film of its period, in its determination to tease our superstitions rather than electrify our sense of awe.

VSoM's tape is culled from

two sources: the main titles are in Italian and full-screen; everything else is letterboxed at approximately 1.66 and in Spanish. The picture is watchable but fuzzy, best viewed through the compression of a small-screen monitor. No English-language version of this film has yet surfaced anywhere in the world, making this English-subtitled copy—for the moment—the only game in town.

SIN, YOU SINNERS!

1963, *Sinister Cinema*,
\$19.00 ppd., 67m 15s

Bobbie (June Colbourne), an aging stripper, holds lovers and enemies alike in thrall with a Haitian doubloon medallion that carries a voodoo curse. The power of the coin—a rusty relic washed clean in the blood of a human sacrifice—extends the illusion of Bobbie's youth, depriving her repressed adult daughter Julie (Dian Lloyd) of her own turn at life. Mother and daughter enter into a deadly game of rivalry when Julie falls for Mama's boyfriend Dave (Derek Murcott), the latest in a long line of lovesick beaux excused by Bobbie with a post-hypnotic suicide command. The direction of this film is credited to Anthony Farrar, but it is actually the work of screenwriter Joe Sarno—whose pioneering sexploitation efforts took the genre into psychological areas of unprecedented daring. A few of Sarno's signature touches are present: hypnotic mind games, toy fetishism, and the double-edged eroticizing of the maternal figure. Of his few early films which have surfaced on video thus far (ie., *Something Weird Video's* **MOONLIGHTING WIVES** [VW 12:11] and **FLESH AND LACE**), this is easily the best: an intense, well-acted, downbeat portrait of suburban witchcraft that stands

on an even keel with such "sleepers" as Curtis Harrington's **NIGHT TIDE** (1960) and Herk Harvey's **CARNIVAL OF SOULS** (1962). Despite its pedigree, the film contains no nudity—Colbourne strips down to pasties—but its tone is dark and pervasively prurient; even its kissing scenes can be lewd to the point of ugliness. Sinister Cinema has unearthed a rather splicy 35mm print for their source material, but this tape represents such a valuable recovery that any textural shortcomings are easily forgiven. Preceded by a trailer for **THE GIANT GILA MONSTER**.

SINTHIA, THE DEVIL'S DOLL

1970 (1968?), *Something Weird Video*, \$23.00 ppd., 76m 55s

Ray Dennis Steckler (using the alias "Sven Christian") photographed and directed this colorful, fleshy psychodrama about a father-fixated young woman (Shula Roan) struggling to atone for stabbing her parents to death during the act of lovemaking and burning their house to the ground. Upon her release from a sanitarium—eight years after the murders, which she committed at the age of 12—she visits a psychiatrist, under whose guidance she embarks on an internal quest to punish the jealous impulse that ruined her life. Written by Herb Robins (née Rabinowitz, the author and star of **THE WORM EATERS**, 1970), who appears briefly as Lucifer in a Hadean digression, this film bears some strong similarities to the kind of free-form, experimental, adult fantasies that Jess Franco was cranking out around the same time, particularly **VENUS IN FURS** (1969). Unfortunately, the symbolic nature of the supporting roles encourages most of the



Aleksandr Kaidanovsky in the "ZONE" in Andrei Tarkovsky's haunting STALKER.

actors to give rigid, one-note performances—whining, chaotic, sleazy or stoic—which are at odds with the fluid scenario. The budgetary restraints also consistently prevent the viewer from fully surrendering to the dreamlike tides of Sinthia's odyssey. Steckler does the best he can with these limitations, however, and the starkly surrealistic *mise en scène* he creates with production designer David Mills is entirely responsible for whatever distinction the film attains. Often cited in reference books as a 1968 production, the end titles sport (what looks like) a 1970 copyright. Aside from commencing abruptly with a spoken line already in-progress, *Something Weird's* print is in very good shape, with minimal blemishes and nice color.

STALKER

1979, Fox Lorber Home Video
#1066, HF, \$89.98, 160m 57s

This stunning film—which completes Fox Lorber's commendably undertaken Andrei Tarkovsky catalog—is set in a militarized, colorless, post-apocalyptic Russia, supposedly devastated by the landing of a giant meteorite—but (if one views between the lines) more likely created by a literally unspeakable nuclear disaster, *à la* Chernobyl. With the disaster area forbidden to them, the survivors foster a belief that “the ZONE” has been so metaphysically altered by the cataclysm that it now contains a magic room where one's deepest wishes can come true. A professional pathfinder or “stalker” (Aleksandr Kaidanovsky)—whose

child was born deformed and telekinetically gifted as a result of his past exposures to the forbidden lands—agrees to escort a disillusioned writer (Anatoly Solonitsyn) and an altruistic scientist (Nikolay Grinko) through the colorful flora of the ZONE, and into the labyrinthine tunnels that lead to the mysterious, wish-granting room. The three men ultimately find their destination and arrive at some unexpected truths that command them far more decisively than their dreams. Based on the novel *ROADSIDE PICNIC* by Boris and Arkady Strugatsky, **STALKER** bonds with **SOLARIS** (1971) and **THE SACRIFICE** (1986) to create one of the great trilogies of filmed science fiction, one related not by narrative but by a shared trajectory of themes and ideas.



Ivan Mozzhukin as the impish, monkey-faced devil in Wladislas Starewicz's CHRISTMAS EVE.

Unlike Fox Lorber's earlier letterboxed Tarkovskys, this B&W/color film was not lensed anamorphically, and thus has come to video with slight peripheral cropping. Despite this minor disappointment, the source print is sound, the color levels are accurately subtle, and the transfer is excellent. Noteworthy touch: the volume of yellow in the "Easy-Read" subtitles actually decreases during the B&W scenes.

STAREWICZ'S FANTASIES

1911-15, Milestone Film & Video, HF/S, \$29.95, 59m 29s

This—the third volume in Milestone's "Early Russian Cinema" series—is a groundbreaking compilation of three live action/stop-motion animation

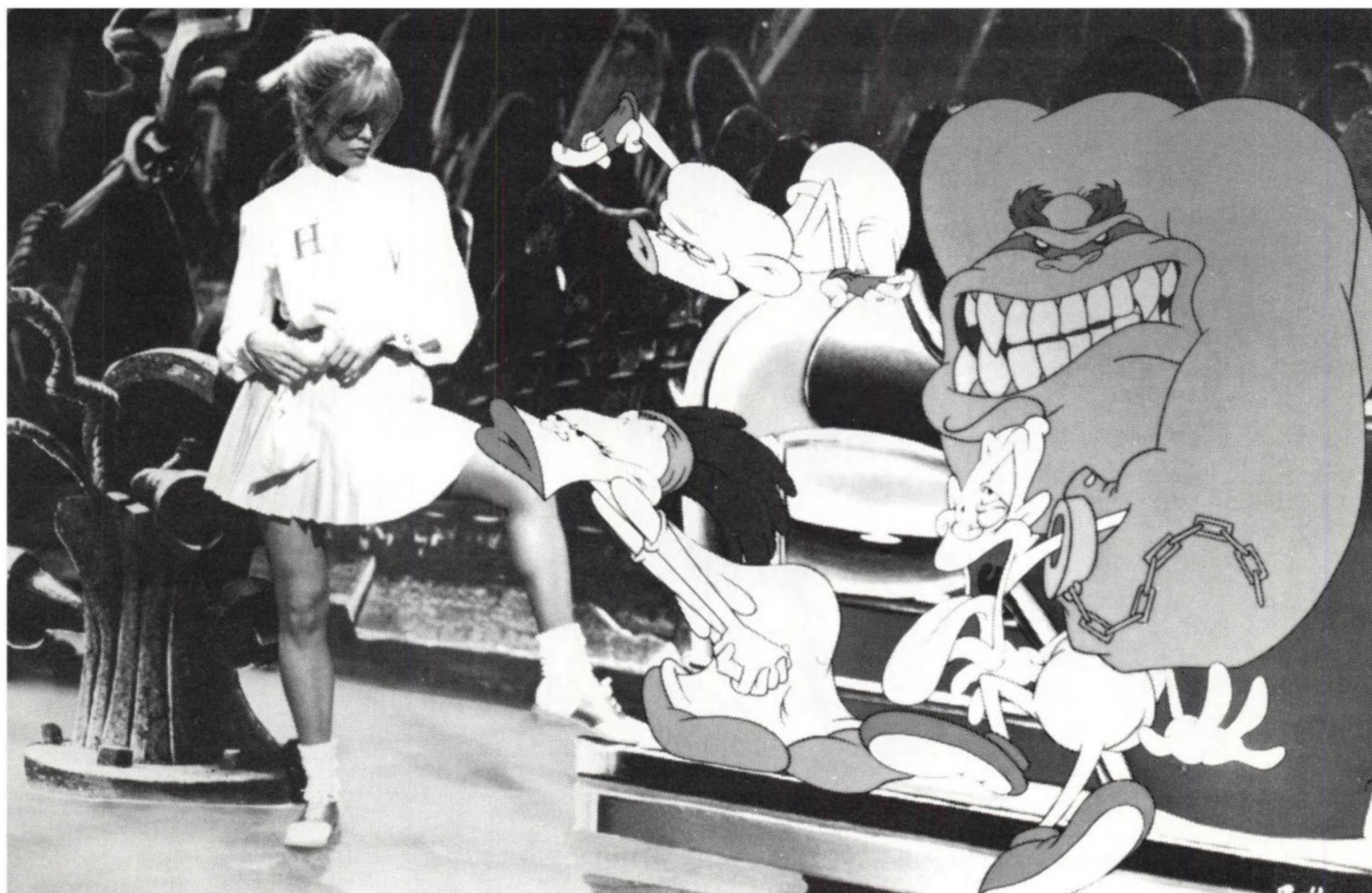
hybrids by Wladyslaw Starewicz (1892-1965), culled from the long-inaccessible Gosfilmofond archives in Moscow. Included are Starewicz's privately funded debut, **THE DRAGONFLY AND THE ANT** [*Strekoza i muravel*, 1913; 4m 46s], based on a fable by Kyrou, which was praised and rewarded by the Tsar; **CHRISTMAS EVE** [*Noch' pered rozhdestvom*, 1913; 40m 55s], an ambitious filming of an episode from Nikolay Gogol's 1831 novel *EVENINGS ON A FARM NEAR DAKANKA*, starring Ivan Mozzhukhin as a mischievous, moon-stealing, monkey-faced Devil; and **THE LILY OF BELGIUM** [*Lilla Bel'gi*, 1915; 13m 37s], a poignant and lovely anti-war parable featuring Starewicz, his daughter Irina, and a supporting cast of articulated insects. While the obsessive interest taken by

Starewicz—an amateur lepidopterist—in the everyday dramas of the insect world may seem a bit cold on first sampling, there is actually a surplus of heart and charm on display here, and his handling of the Macabre has a uniquely impish flavor. The cassette's transparent shellcase permits a view of some very informative liner notes by Ian Christie on the interior, and the quality of image and musical accompaniment (by Neil Brand) are ideal; the box short-changes the program's running time at 58m. Milestone is currently preparing a definitive, feature-length sampling of works from the animator's emigré years in France—during which he was known as "Ladislav Starevich"—including such stop-motion classics as **THE MASCOT** and **THE REVENGE OF THE CAMERAMAN**.

ZERO IN AND SCREAM

1970, Something Weird Video, \$23.00 ppd., 63m 10s

Mike (Michael Stearns), an ultra-conservative loner, terrorizes the Hollywood hills by making sniper attacks on young lovers. As a regular patron of The Classic Cat (a real Hollywood strip joint—what publicity!), one of the dancers invites him to her place for a party, where he remains aloof as the others strip for a swimming pool orgy. When he is snidely dismissed by one of the pool sticks, he drives to an overlook vantage, watches the water sports through his rifle's telescopic lens and, deciding that the man is unworthy of the "classy" dancer, fires some *interruptus* into their *coitus*. The rest of this minimalistic, mean-spirited exercise follows Mike's would-be courtship of the stripper (whom he woos with speeches like: "A man needs beauty in his life, and a woman can provide that... but when a man climbs on top of her, he makes her



Kim Basinger wants to be a real girl in Ralph Bakshi's not-so-cricket COOL WORLD.

ugly”), his inevitable rejection, and his even more inevitable plan of retribution. Most of the sex scenes are shot (excuse the pun) through a rifle sight matte, encouraging viewers—to an uncomfortable degree—to take their voyeuristic pleasures from a hateful, cold-blooded vantage. The only relief from the self-loathing gloom comes from the soundtrack music, which occasionally interrupts its bump-and-grind blues with a familiar, theramin-driven track heard in countless low-budget SF films of the '50s. Directed by Les Emerson and scripted by Howard Edding, the film's sole trivial interest is the cinematography of exploitation legend R. Lee Frost. Image quality is sharp, but the 35mm source print is worn and scratchy, and the audio carries a surplus of extraneous noise. That said, there are no

splices at all, and the film (which contains frontal male and female nudity) is completely intact.

ANIMATION

By G. Michael Dobbs

COOL WORLD

1992, Paramount Home Video, HF/S/SS/CC, NSR, 101m

If nothing else, **COOL WORLD** is testimony to the way modern Hollywood operates. Made by Ralph Bakshi, a man who once billed himself as a rebel and an original, **COOL WORLD** has all the look and feel of a desperate knock-off clone of **WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT?** and **FRITZ THE CAT**. Bakshi came out of his self-imposed retirement from theatrical

animation to direct what is billed as “A Hip, Sexy Film” starring Kim Basinger as Holly Would, a cartoon siren who is determined to become “real.” The shocking plot point is that to achieve this transformation, Holly must make love with a human. When Bakshi made **FRITZ** two decades ago, his whole point was to shock audiences with his uses of sexual explicitness and profanity. This kind of shock value is pretty worthless today, and there's nothing left in this movie to compensate that loss. There's precious little wit, and the explanation about the coexistence of these two worlds is never advanced. The animation looks like sloppy Terrytoons material, and, to make matters worse, Kim Basinger is so horribly lit, dressed and made-up, she should have stayed a cartoon.



The cast of Hemdale's LITTLE NEMO: ADVENTURES IN SLUMBERLAND.

LITTLE NEMO: ADVENTURES IN SLUMBERLAND

1992, Hemdale Home Video
#7139, HF/S/SS, \$24.95, 85m

If there was ever the case of having too many cooks in the kitchen... The main titles of this movie are an incredible read and, ultimately, may be its most interesting sequence. Big-time Hollywood director Chris Columbus (**HOME ALONE**) co-wrote the script, based on a story by famed French illustrator Jean "Moebius" Giraud and Yutaka Fujuka; this, in turn, was derived from a "concept for the screen" by Ray Bradbury, who was advised by five "story consultants," including veteran Disney animators Frank Thomas and Oliver Johnston, not to mention **CHINATOWN** writer/director Robert Towne! The product of all of this high-profile labor is a well-

intentioned adaptation of Winsor McCay's classic comic strip that, nevertheless, misses the real essence of McCay's work. There is an obvious effort to give the film a McCay look, and some of the sequences (such as the walking bed) are straight out of the original strips; however, in the film's determination to have a conventional Good vs. Evil plot, the production lacks the charm and gentleness of McCay's original. The animation, produced in Japan, is quite well-done, and the vocal performers are acceptable (with the possible exception of Mickey Rooney, whose tired gravelly tones are unsuited for the puckish Flip). Perhaps the most perplexing part of **LITTLE NEMO** is the addition of Nemo's constant companion, a flying squirrel who wears a leather aviator helmet! Which one of the aforementioned luminaries do you think sneaked in a **ROCKY & BULLWINKLE** reference?

[In addition to the cardboard slipcase version, Hemdale is also making this title available in a plastic clamshell box; the catalog number for this item is #7140, and the price is the same.—Ed.]

ROCK-A-DOODLE

1992, HBO Home Video, \$24.98

What the *hell* is this film about? Don Bluth's latest film continues his artistic tradition of being an ex-Disney employee who apes much of the style of his former studio in his work. This is Bluth's version of a **SILLY SYMPHONY**; there's something of a plot about a bunch of barnyard animals (who all wear clothes) needing the services of their rooster to make the sun rise, because if he doesn't make the sun rise, the evil giant magical Duke of Owls (who hates the light) will eat everyone. The rooster left the

farm after being tricked into thinking the sun has risen without his crow, and is now in The City staring at a nightclub singer known as "The King." A group of animals from the farm go to find him, and we discover this is all in a little boy's story book. Only *his* family's farm is facing torrential rains, and the Duke *is* real, and turns the boy into a kitten, and he joins the storybook quest! Huh?! **ROCK-A-DOODLE** is narrated by Disney regular Phil Harris in an attempt to tie all the loose ends together, and Glen Campbell provides the voice of the rooster. The animation is fluid and colorful, and the characters are the one-joke types frequently found in later Disney features—for example, a magpie who likes to eat, an intelligent bespectacled mouse named Peepers, and so on. Children, I've been told, like the film. Save the children.

ASIA

By Erik Sulev

BABY CART 4: HEART OF A PARENT... HEART OF A CHILD

1972, Video Search of Miami,
\$27.90 ppd., 80m

If you're familiar with New World's **SHOGUN ASSASSIN**, a 1982 release that re-edited footage from the first two installments of Toho's popular **Kozure Oh-kami** ("Sword of Vengeance") series, you might want to check out VSoM's letterboxed, subtitled copies of all six "Baby Cart" films. Both letterboxing and subtitles are essential since there is a *lot* to be missed without them. While it helps to be somewhat familiar with the storyline, this fourth episode, directed by Buichi Sato, manages

quite well on its own. Itto Ogami, the "Lone Wolf" (Tomisaburo Wakayama) is still pushing his young son Daigoro (Akihiro Tomikawa) across the Japanese countryside in a deadly accessorized baby cart, but has now agreed to track down and kill Oyuki, a beautiful tattooed female assassin. The ongoing storyline is also furthered, if not quite resolved, despite the expected amounts of bloodshed for which the series is famous.

The film is filled with memorable and violent set-pieces, including a sequence (imitated by John Woo in **HEROES SHED NO TEARS**, 1986), in which Daigoro is trapped in a burning field, and saves himself by burying himself in a hole as the flames rage above-ground. The exciting and dynamic swordplay of Ogami and Oyuki is quick, deadly and visually striking, complemented by an eclectic soundtrack that is at times similar to Goblin's score for **DEEP RED** (1976). Not to be forgotten, the baby cart itself continues to unleash its dangerous tricks, this time spraying the Shogun's hordes with deadly gunfire, as well as releasing the odd hidden blade here and there—watch those ankles!

BLACK CAT 2: ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT YELTSIN

1992, Long Shong Video, 89m

Director Stephen Shin's first entry in this series [VW 15:24-25] was an enjoyable copy of **La Femme Nikita**. **BLACK CAT 2**, however, is far less sinister and more escapist, and all the weaker because of it. Erica (Jade Leung) is experimented upon even further by the CIA to turn her into a perfect killing machine, but when the Anti-Yeltsin Organization's plan to kill the Russian leader is uncovered, Erica teams up with Agent Robin (Robin Shou) to eliminate the



THE "SPECIAL Widescreen Edition" laserdisc of **LITTLE NEMO: ADVENTURES IN SLUMBERLAND** (Hemdale

Home Video #8140, \$39.95) is letterboxed at 1.78:1, and features a 21m 40s "The Making of LITTLE NEMO" promotional film. This gratingly wholesome featurette means well, but fails miserably as a documentary. One sequence attempts to show how videotape of a live harpist was used as a model for the animation staff; after some intricate closeup shots of the musician's fingers at play, the announcer booms, "And here's the end result"... in which the harp-playing Princess is shown only briefly in extreme long-shot, and then kept entirely offscreen! While the subtly colored backgrounds look quite good, the foregrounds aren't as sharp as they should be, and some of the more garish colors—particularly Flip's wardrobe—look oversaturated. One wonders what June Foray—who contributes the voice of "Librarian"—thought of "Icarus the Flying Squirrel."

EN PRIMEUR
Excusez-moi mais vos dents sont dans mon cou!
Une comédie pleine de bon sang! ... elle fait deux trous d'un coup!

LADY DRACULA 14 ANS

Elle ne démord jamais!

2^E FILM
le Sommeum de l'ACTION sans Arrêt!

avec **Brad Harris**
Evelyne Kraft

3^e film BARRACUDA
 2^e film Repentigny OPÉRATION DAGRON

FUREUR DU TIGRE avec **BRUCE LI**

St-EUSTACHE 1 **REPENTIGNY 1** **St-HILAIRE 1**

would-be assassin and foil the coup. Despite some wild moments (like a **SPY WHO LOVED ME**-inspired ski-chase, and Erica mistakenly shooting a 75 year old grandmother through the head!), much of this sequel is sadly uninteresting. What most hurts the film is the elimination of Simon Yam's role as Erica's no-nonsense CIA trainer, who added the sinister, amoral edge to the first film. Leung also loses whatever charisma she possessed in the first film, thanks to an absurd plot and uninspired direction which literally leave her wandering about mindlessly. The Mandarin language tape is subtitled in English and the mild letterboxing fluctuates between 1.66 and 1.33:1. A third installment is reportedly already completed.

THE WICKED CITY

1992, Long Shong Video, 95m

Tsui Hark and Raymond Lee produced this fun, live-action version of the popular adult *anime* of the same name (known in some circles as **SUPERNATURAL BEAST CITY**), directed by Mak Tai Kit. Taki (Leon Lai) and Ken (Jacky Cheung) are special agents for the "Anti-Rapter Bureau," an organization that hunts down "Rapters"—dimension-crossing criminals who infiltrate human society to corrupt it with sex, drugs, and wealth (what, no rock and roll?), while waiting for their chance to take over. Matters are complicated by Taki's involvement with a female Rapter, and Ken is tormented by the fact that his mother

was a Rapter, causing his loyalty to be doubted by his superiors. Those familiar with the animated version will discover that the storyline has been vastly altered, and that the rawer sexual escapades have been toned down for commercial and budgetary reasons. Some brief nudity may have been snipped on this Taiwanese video release, but until the Cinema City laserdisc is released in the next few months, we can't know for sure. One of the film's strangest highlights finds the villainous son (Roy Cheung) of the Rapter leader simultaneously playing/screwing a shape-shifting Rapter who has turned herself into a pinball machine! The tape is mildly letterboxed at 1.66:1 to accommodate the English subtitles.

CANADA

By John Charles

LADY DRACULA

1975, Videoglobe, OP, 78m 13s

In 1876, Count Dracula (Stephen Boyd) vampirizes a young girl and is staked by angry villagers shortly thereafter. One hundred years later, construction workers unearth a coffin containing the dead child. Upon returning to life, she feasts on blood and transforms into Evelyn Kraft (**GOLIATHON**), who soon leaves behind a trail of drained corpses. Brad Harris plays a cop assigned to the murder investigation, only to fall in love with the stunning blonde. Kraft makes a very sexy bloodsucker but this cheap, dated German comedy has little else to offer. Director Franz Joseph Gottlieb did much more impressive work during the 1960s, when he helmed some of the most stylish Edgar Wallace *krimis*. Eddi Arent, who provided comedy relief in several of the Wallace films, does similar work here as Harris' bumbling colleague. The video transfer of this French language tape is much too dark and the brightness level fluctuates constantly during some scenes. Not to be confused with Richard Blackburn's **LADY DRACULA** (aka **LEMORA, THE LADY DRACULA** and **THE LEGENDARY CURSE OF LEMORA**, 1974), which is more interesting.

ROADKILL

1989, Cineplex Odeon Video
COH V6175, HF,
\$109.95 (\$Canadian), 85m 2s

Long overdue, this video release of director Bruce McDonald's low-budget, B&W Canadian cult favorite should not be confused with Jim Van Bebber's featurette **ROADKILL! THE LAST DAYS OF**

JOHN MARTIN (1989). Valerie Buhagiar stars as Ramona, the meek assistant of a hyperactive concert promoter who is backing a tour by a rock band called "The Children of Paradise." When the group starts missing dates, Ramona journeys through Northern Ontario after them, encountering all manner of weirdos. Best of the bunch is Russell (played by screenwriter Don McKellar), a nebbish who wants to be a serial killer despite the fact that it's "an American kind of thing." McDonald appears in the film as Bruce Shack, a music video director who abandons his latest project ("a medieval, futuristic thing") in order to document Ramona's odyssey. **ROADKILL** boasts a good, varied rock soundtrack and features cameos by Joey Ramone and Toronto cult star Nash the Slash. This is a fun, witty film that's definitely worth checking out but, to fully appreciate it, you just might have to be Canadian, eh? Buhagiar and McKellar returned for the director's more expensive, color follow-up **HIGHWAY 61** (1992), which is also worth seeing. In the meantime, just remember: "If you wanna drive, you gotta kill." The image is cropped from 1.66 with no apparent damage.

GERMANY

By Peter Blumenstock

KILLER SIND UNSERE GÄSTE

aka *Gli Assassini sono nostri ospiti*
"The Murderers Are Our Guests"
1974, Italian, SKC Video Film, LB,
\$7, 72m 23s

While Aldo Lado's masterful **THE NIGHT TRAIN MURDERS** [*L'Ultimo Treno Della Notte*, "The Last Train of the Night," 1975] has received positive

recognition over the years, this earlier thriller—similar to Lado's film in its fascination with violence, crime and sexual desires—remains undeservedly underappreciated, and appears here on German video for the first time. Powerfully directed, photographed and edited by Vincenzo Rigo, **Killer sind unsere Gäste** involves four jewelry robbers who hold a doctor and his wife hostage, hiding inside their deserted country house from the police. A clever 180° plot twist at the end reveals that everything was just the doctor's diabolical plan to rid himself of his wife and take a "vacation" in Argentina with the stolen jewelry and Oriana, the female ringleader of the criminals. Antonio De Teffe alias Anthony Steffen (**DJANGO THE BASTARD**, 1969) and gorgeous Margaret Lee (**DOUBLE FACE**, 1969), creating a strangely melancholy aura around her performance as usual, are a stunning, infernal duo. To make an already likable cast even better, Luigi Pistilli can be seen in a minor role as Chief Inspector De Santis. Director Rigo was a second rung figure of the Italian B-film industry, who followed this project with such sex films as **Lettomania** (1976), starring Carmen Villani and Harry Reems, and whose once-promising name sadly disappeared from the screens in the late '70s.

Released by SKC Video (Sauerland Kunststoffe GmbH & Co KG, D-5982 Neuenrade, Germany—actually a plastics manufacturer, who apparently had the impression that there were not enough slippery video companies supplying the German market), **Killer sind unsere Gäste** comes letterboxed (1.6:1), and is taken from a bright print. Unfortunately, it is also cut three times to avoid an "18" rating, deleting the most explicit scenes of violence and

lesbianism between Margaret Lee and Livia Cerini. Curiously, a short scene found at the beginning of the German tape, involving—Lee's theft of a transvestite's car—can't be found in the original Italian release by Milan-based Avo Film, but is *essential* to understand the film's ending! This one fact prevents this otherwise shortened version from being a complete waste of money.

INDIA

By Brian Thomas

When I first moved into my Chicago neighborhood a few years ago, I gave little thought to the numerous Indian video stores I found. I'd always been told that there was no such thing as an Indian horror or science fiction film;

in fact, I always had the impression that all Indian films were pretty much alike: lighthearted musical comedies and soap operas. A few experimental rentals seemed to bear this out. With the added element of some occasional, poorly-executed, martial arts battles, I found nothing that strayed too far from the tried-and-true formulas.

But the more I thought about it, the less sense it made. In every culture as rich in folklore as India's, tales of terror and the supernatural inevitably make their way into the popular arts. And with the global village getting smaller every day, goblins are bound to pop up in even the most conservative media. Investigating further, I found films with more action, drama, gun battles, and mayhem—although not yet on the level of Hong Kong or American action efforts. I even saw a poster for what looked like an Indian version of *THE DOLL SQUAD* (although I couldn't find the tape). And then I found this—an actual monster movie!

AJOOBA KOODRAT KAA

("Wonderful Guardian")

1989, Rainbow Video, NSR, 135m

Though it has all the ingredients of traditional Indian films (multiple love stories, lame comedy, colorful musical production numbers at the drop of a hat), this film sheds more blood onscreen than I'd come to expect. But the main difference is the title character, introduced in the credits as "mighty Himalayan man—YETI." In all of the scenes shot inside an ice cave, the sharp-toothed Yeti looks pretty darn scary, lumbering out of the shadows to kill off uninvited guests. The Yeti's face is quite convincing, even in close-ups, and the rest of the suit has an unusual look. But when the beast comes out in the sunlight, the illusion falls apart, as the "Yeti" suit is revealed for what it is—a hair-covered gill man



GLI ASSASSINI SONO NOSTRI OSPITI

LUIGI PISTILLI · SANDRO PIZZOCHERO
GIUSEPPE CASTELLANO · GIOVANNI BRUSATORI
GIANNI DEI · LIVIA CERINI

VINCENZO RIGO

TECHNICOLOR · ROBERTO RIZZO · NANDO DE LUCA
GASPARI PIZZARDI

costume left over from some other film, zipper clearly visible in many shots. This is just the beginning of the many indignities heaped upon this poor monster.

The plot concerns a little girl named Sasha, who is kidnapped and taken away to the mountains. Before the villains can collect their ransom, Sasha escapes and hides in the Yeti's cave. Instead of eating her, the beast befriends the girl (much to my disappointment). They even scamper around in the snow, while Sasha sings the very annoying song, "Yeti, I Love You." (This song is repeated several times in the film, so keep the mute button handy.) A band of Sasha's friends show up to rescue her. The kidnappers change tactics—and kidnap the Yeti! Then, Sasha and her friends rescue the Yeti and take him home. The villains follow them into the mountains for a big showdown. Yeti really comes to life in these final scenes, dispatching most of the thugs in various ways, all of them quite violent. The movie ends with a rousing chorus of the Yeti theme, which haunts me still.

RAAT

("Night")

1991, Rainbow Video,
LB/NSR, approx. 140m

When I first spotted the poster in the window—lightning bolts illuminating haunted faces, a dark brooding house—I knew at last that I'd found the real thing: a *genuine Indian horror film*. And what's more, it's a darn good one.

Director Rangopal Varma must be a big horror fan, as a variety of European and American influences are readily apparent in his work. The mobile camera work of Argento, the moody lighting of Bava, the unexpected jolts that come in the best work of Hooper and Carpenter, and the eerie sense that the familiar world is turning upside-down,

which Romero conveys so well—all these are combined here with enough original style to avoid an overemphasis of homage.

A young girl moves into a haunted house and becomes possessed by an evil spirit. We've seen it before, but we haven't seen it *in India* before, and the unusual setting, as well as the director's obvious talent, give this film quite a bit of staying power. One imaginative scene takes place in one of India's huge movie theaters. The exorcist character is a weird mystic unlike any other I've seen in films, and his introductory scene is surprisingly effective. Other helpful elements are the lengthy running time, which allows the director to draw us into the story at a more natural pace, and the fact that the tape is letterboxed, which adds to the effectiveness of almost every scene.

Also worth mentioning is an interesting subtext of the film. While the older characters seem content to follow traditional Indian customs in dress and behavior, Minnie (the possessed heroine) and her friends at school are obsessed with Western culture. They wear "New Kids" T-shirts, listen to Michael Jackson on their Walkmans, and read MAD Magazine! In one scene, Minnie is scolded by her mother for staying up late to watch Jack Sholder's **THE HIDDEN** on TV! Is the supernatural possession symbolic of a very real possession of India's youth by a frightening foreign influence?

The only real letdown comes at the film's abrupt climax. After the long build-up of tension, the story demands a huge finish, and it simply doesn't pay off very well, as if the filmmakers ran out of time and money when they needed it most. However, it doesn't ruin the movie, and I'll definitely be watching for more of Varma's work.

• • •

A few notes about Indian films on video: There are usually no

subtitles; characters occasionally utter words, even entire phrases, in English. These are mostly simple greetings (as in HK films) and descriptions of emotions ("Why are you so irritable?").

The films usually run over 2 hours, to accommodate their many musical numbers—and there are usually intermissions of 10-15m each, containing trailers and commercials aimed at the Indian community. Some of these can be quite entertaining; they can break the flow of a film, or provide a welcome rest, but that's the way things are. Consequently, Indian tapes are recorded at LP speed. I suspect that when the tapes come into the country legally, the film is on two cassettes, then the distributor dubs them onto one. Piracy runs rampant, but I believe the distributors are using the commercials as a tool to keep costs down, so image quality has been improving lately. However, the tapes are usually mastered from a much-used print, so expect a few scratches even on new releases.

Rental costs are very low, just like at the Asian video shops, and I've yet to be charged for bringing a tape in late. Shops are frequently run by shopkeepers who speak no English, so expect some confusion. Mostly, you'll have to go by the pictures on the boxes, so good luck!

ITALY

By Simone Romano

FERMATE IL MONDO... VOGLIO SCENDERE!

("Stop the World... I Want to Get Off!")
1967, Deltavideo, Lit, 29,900,
89m 19s

The plot of this offbeat, surreal comedy—helmed by former actor

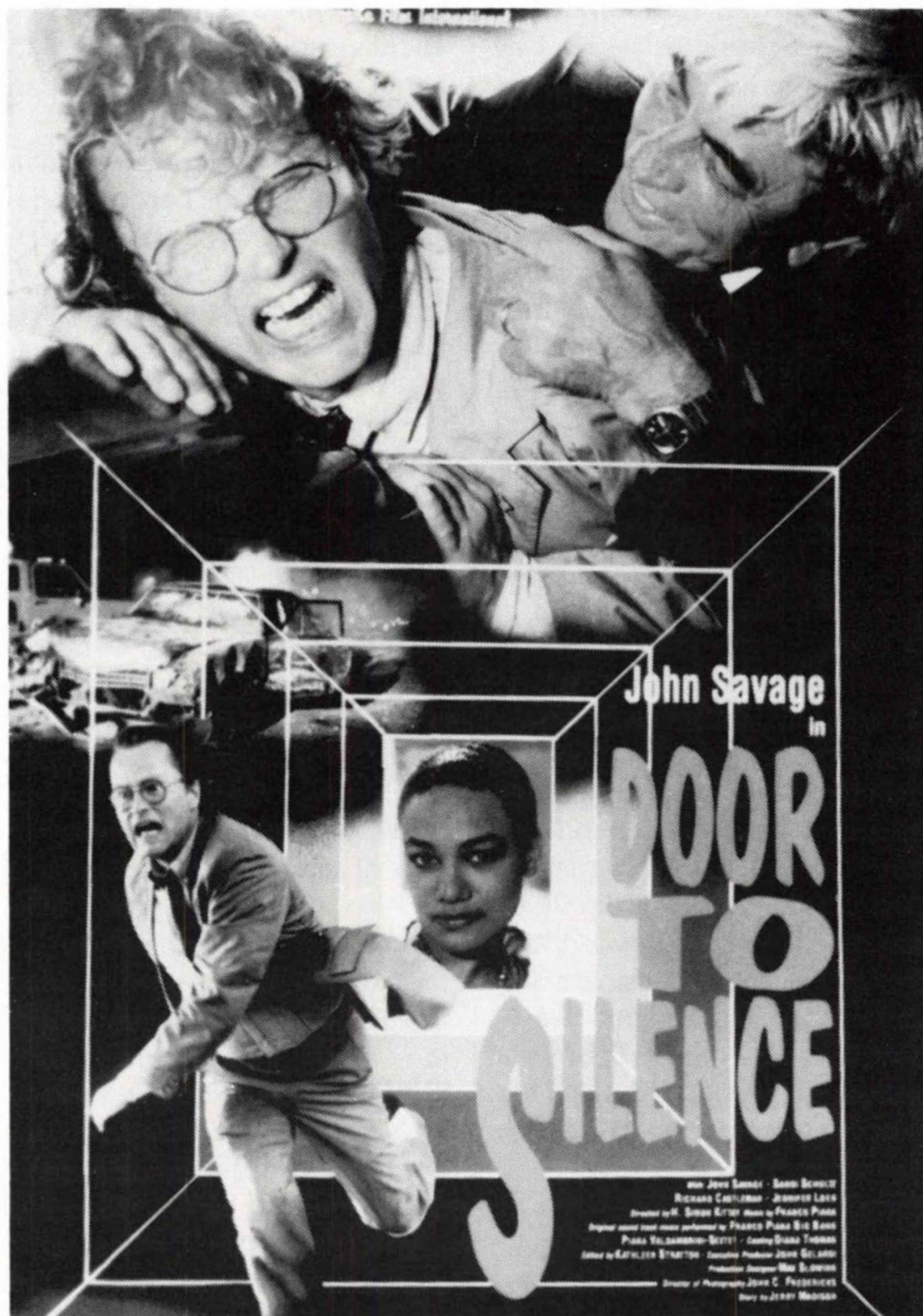
Giancarlo Cobelli—revolves around the “rise and fall” of Riky (Lando Buzzanca), the least intellectual member of an “anti-establishment” bunch who, after a prankish impersonation of a comic-strip super hero, falls prey to the Establishment and becomes a TV teen idol. After witnessing Riky’s success, his friends surrender their principles and try to embrace the superficial and corrupt society they had been fighting, even after Riky’s career comes to an abrupt end, when an LSD orgy in his apartment is accidentally broadcast on television! Cobelli’s attempt to create a surrealistic, **HELLZAPOPPIN**-style comedy fails miserably, and the film is almost irritating in its preference to make fun of naïve idealists, rather than criticize society’s falsehoods and corruption. The only reason to suffer through this film’s entirety is Barbara Steele’s performance as Riky’s Romanian (!) fiancée, though she actually has very little screen time and sports a horrendously haggard hair-do.

LE PORTE DEL SILENZIO

(*The Doors to Silence*)

1991, Eden Video

A man attends a funeral ceremony together with friends and relatives... then he reads his own name on the tombstone, on the funerary ornaments, in newspapers’ obituaries... his wristwatch is stuck on the same time... you get the idea. Five minutes into the film, you’ve already guessed that the protagonist has died in the prologue’s car crash, but doesn’t know it—and he’s going to drive around for another 80m, witnessing “strange” occurrences, until he realizes that his “time has come.” Unfortunately, this is not an old *TWILIGHT ZONE* episode but *Lucio Fulci’s latest film*, shot entirely in the Louisiana swamplands. The “unknowing dead” theme has



been used dozens of times before (never better than in **CARNIVAL OF SOULS**), but here—thanks to a believable performance by a bloated-looking John Savage—Fulci’s one-joke script is never quite as boring as it sounds.

All of the advertising for this film—produced by Joe D’Amato’s Filmirage company—including the video box cover—carries a ludicrous, new pseudonym for Fulci: “H. Simon Kittay.” (Thankfully, everybody is credited with their real name onscreen). D’Amato also claimed that he shot some additional scenes “to make the film a little more interesting,” which looks

very doubtful. My best guess is that he may have added one totally off-key, laughable scene in which the dead protagonist picks up a hitchhiking hooker and can’t manage to get an erection—some “rigor mortis” might have helped! *Le Porte del Silenzio* was adapted from a short story titled “Le Porte del Nulla” (“The Door to Nothing”), written by Fulci himself, inspired by a verse from the Book of Revelations. The film did not have a proper theatrical release in Italy, and should be available by the time you read this from Eden Video (Via Achille Grandi 1, 20017 Mazza de Rho [MI], Italy).



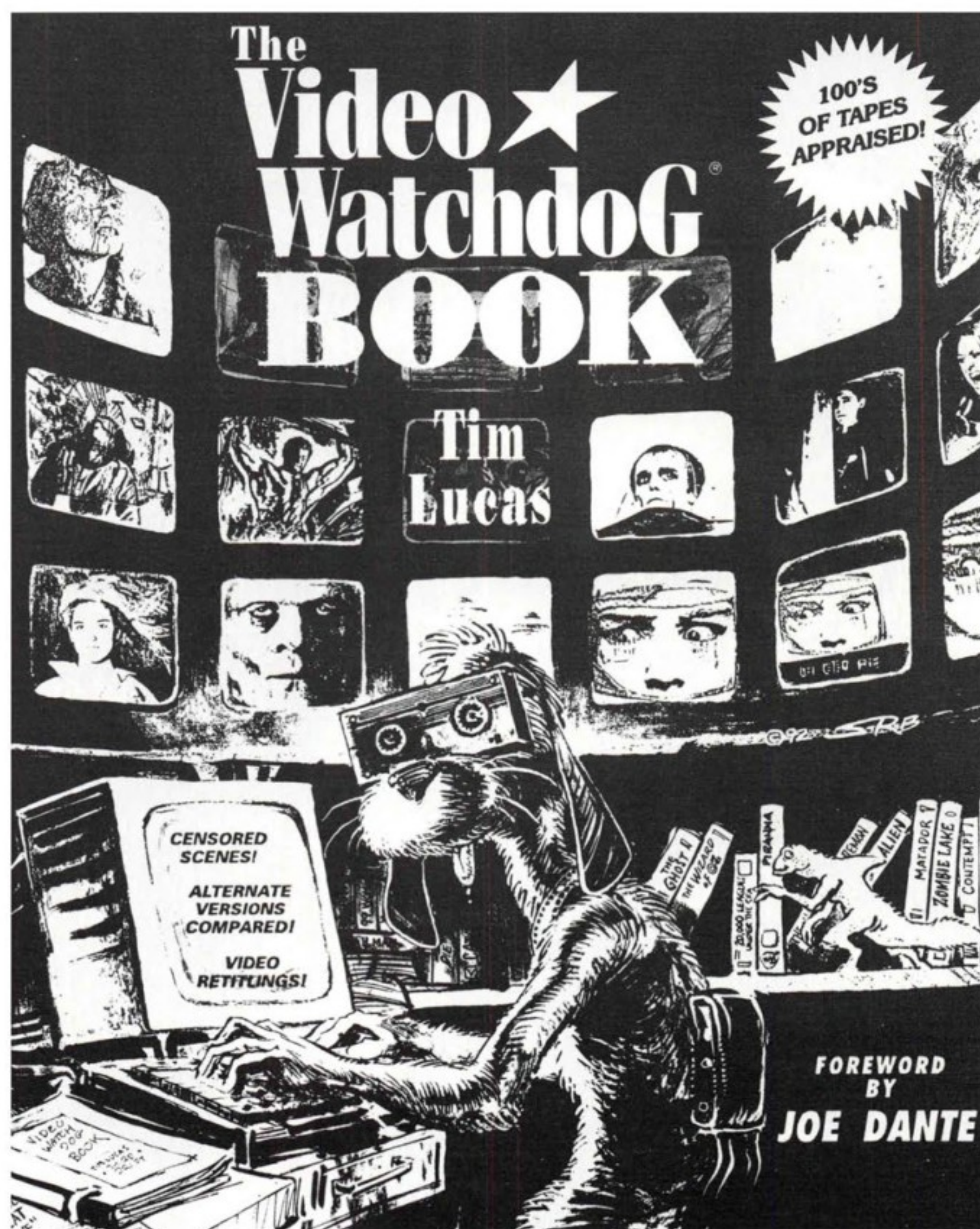
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**"A
MUST
for
Fanatics!"**

—*Peder Pedersen,
INFERNO (Denmark)

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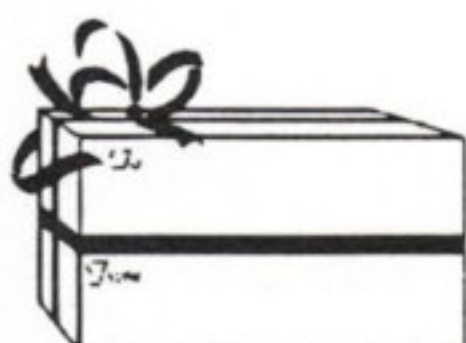
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Reggie Nalder

The Forgotten Idol

An Appreciation

By Tim Lucas

IF YOU TRY to find Reggie Nalder in most film reference books, you'll find the space he so richly deserves occupied by Nita Naldi, the forgotten flamenco ingenue of John Barrymore's **DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE** (1920) and Rudolph Valentino's **BLOOD AND SAND** (1922). Leslie Halliwell's **FILMGOER'S COMPANION**, in its quest to catalog the best of cinema, finds room for Joe Namath—the redoubtable star of **C.C. AND COMPANY** (1970)—but none for the man who played the Albert Hall assassin in Alfred Hitchcock's 1956 remake of **THE MAN WHO KNEW TOO MUCH**.

Reggie Nalder—like Rondo Hatton, George Macready, and Richard Lynch—was a sensitive gentleman who parlayed physical misfortune into a career in movie menace. To see Reggie was never to forget him. His receding hairline gave him the appearance of a tanned skull with a ruined mouth and two soft, provocative eyes. Give Sean Connery a gun and a tuxedo and you have James Bond. Given the same accoutrements, Reggie Nalder was a **DICK TRACY** villain come to life.

Born September 4 in Vienna, Alfred Reginald Natzick was the second son of Austrian cabaret artist Sismund Natzick and his French wife Ida Hertzog, an actress who enjoyed a brief career in the German cinema. The young Reggie grew up in the midst of theater, indulging his interest in art by painting theatrical backdrops and eventually discovering a passion for acting and dance. When Sismund died Reggie and his brother Ernst moved with their mother from Vienna to France. It was in Paris that Reggie continued his study of the theatrical arts under the distinguished tutelage of Louis Jouvet—then the director of the Théâtre de Champs Elysées—who predicted that he would find his greatest success in the realm of musical comedy.

*Left: As an Apache dancer in Paris, early 1930s.
Right: An atmospheric portrait from the 1950s.*







With Doris Day (Cincinnati's Doris Kappelhoff) on the set of Hitchcock's *THE MAN WHO KNEW TOO MUCH*.

The next thirty or so years are a blur. There was a spell in the 1930s as a celebrated Apache dancer in the cabarets of Paris... then there was the War... and then the mysterious incident that burned the lower third of his face. He explained his disfigurement with one of two stories; one explanation was obliquely connected to the death of his brother Ernst, but neither account made any reference to the nightmares he must have encountered (and survived) as a Jew in Nazi-occupied Paris.

The earliest known screen appearances by Reggie Nalder (who changed his *nom d'écran* for obvious post-war reasons) occur in such French productions as *Le Signal Rouge* (1949, one of the last films to star Erich von Stroheim) and *THE ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN FABIAN* (1951), a Vincent Price vehicle

nominally scripted by Errol Flynn. When Hitchcock placed Reggie's reptilian leer behind the Luger in *THE MAN WHO KNEW TOO MUCH*, it was such a perfection of casting that he was immediately and forever stereotyped as a cold-blooded killer. "*L'Homme Au Visage Sans Expression*," as the French press dubbed him, attended the 1955 Cannes Film Festival and became a fixture there for several years, often menacing nubile starlets with knives and guns for publicity shots. These shenanigans occasionally paid off, landing him plum roles in such thrillers as Harald Reinl's *Romare!, Das Mädchen mit den Grünen Augen* ("Romare!, the Girl with the Green Eyes," 1958), in which he received fourth billing.

Reggie moved to Los Angeles in the early 1960s. One of his first jobs was a guest appearance on the

*At the Cannes Film Festival:
Menacing an unidentified starlet for a
publicity photo (circa late '50s), and with a
Marilyn Monroe standee in 1960.*



ABC-TV series *SURFSIDE SIX*, in an episode entitled "The Chase." Perhaps more memorably, he essayed two effective roles on CBS-TV's terror anthology series *THRILLER*; in Paul Henreid's "Terror in Teakwood" (5/16/61), he was Gafke the graverobber, hired by concert pianist Guy Rolfe to steal the hands of a dead rival, and he had the title role of the undead sorcerer in "The Return of Andrew Bentley" (12/11/61), directed by John (ONE STEP BEYOND) Newland. Despite the booming boxoffice that existed for horror films in the early '60s, these creepy appearances did nothing for Reggie's career. Nevertheless, his presence in Hollywood in 1962 allowed him to accept small but indelible roles in John Frankenheimer's **THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE**, **CONVICTS FOUR** (which reunited him with Vincent Price), and Robert





As Albino the witch-hunter in *MARK OF THE DEVIL*.

Mulligan's **THE SPIRAL ROAD**. These were followed by a brief return to France for René Clement's **THE DAY AND THE HOUR** [*Le Jour et l'Heure*, 1963], in which he played a Gestapo agent opposite Simone Signoret.

It was in Hollywood, during the fallow years of the '60s, that Reggie wrote an original screen treatment entitled *FORGOTTEN IDOLS*. Set in 1920s Austria, it was the autobiographical (and somewhat Oedipal) story of a famous stage actress—much like Reggie's late mother—whose early and mysterious retirement prompts a young admirer's attempts to lure her back to the theatre. He would share this operatic outline with show business acquaintances for the rest of his life, but never succeeded in seeing it realized.

Reggie's next conspicuous appearances were again on American television. He was the alien Sharas in *STAR TREK*'s "Journey to Babel"

(11/17/67) and Count Zendar in *THE WILD WILD WEST*'s "The Night of the Gruesome Games" (10/25/68). In 1969, he travelled to Munich, Germany to play the lecherous witchfinder Albino in **MARK OF THE DEVIL**, a violent exploitation film scripted by British film critic Michael Armstrong, who co-directed with producer Adrian Hoven. This film was released in America in 1971 through Hallmark Films, whose advertising deemed it "The First Movie Rated 'V' for Violence." As a further attraction, ticket-holders were supplied with a souvenir "vomit bag" embossed with Reggie's gloating likeness. The film's extraordinary American success prompted Hoven to film **MARK OF THE DEVIL, PART II** (1972), with Nalder cast in the similar role of "Natas" ("Satan" spelled backwards). Because the first film's "Rated 'V'" promotion had aroused the ire of the MPAA, the sequel was submitted for an official rating, and was repeatedly rated "X" until a disembowelled print finally received the coveted "R." While many prints—including the one available on cassette from Video Dimensions—were censored, some uncut prints managed to find their way into theaters.

In the meantime, the 1970s found Reggie receiving work from filmmakers inspired by his one great moment in the Hitchcockian limelight. Dario Argento cast him as an ill-fated assassin in his feature debut, **THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE** (1970)—a part which Argento had written with Reggie specifically in mind—and Curtis Harrington cast him as the reanimated corpse Perdido in the Made-for-TV chiller **THE DEAD DON'T DIE** (1975). Other television assignments also popped up, including appearances in *SEARCH*, *THE HARDY BOYS MYSTERIES*, *McCLOUD* (in which he played the mute butler of horror star John Carradine), and *FANTASY ISLAND* (which cast him as a Nazi). A bit part in **FELLINI'S CASANOVA** (1976) quietly marked the end of his European career.

In 1977, Reggie played "Veidt Smith" in **ZOLTAN, HOUND OF DRACULA** (aka **DRACULA'S DOG**)—directed by filmmaker Albert Band, whose earlier efforts included the respectable **IBURY THE LIVING** (1958) and **FACE OF FIRE** (1959). This low-budget affair was unexpectedly followed by one of the highlights of Reggie's career: his casting as the cadaverous Mr. Barlow in Tobe Hooper's two-part, CBS-TV miniseries **SALEM'S LOT**, based on the novel by Stephen King. Sporting blue, bald-pated, batlike makeup inspired by the look of Max Schreck in F.W. Murnau's **NOSFERATU** (1922), Reggie stole the three-hour miniseries in less than five minutes of screen time.

SALEM'S LOT was a prestigious and profitable assignment, but Reggie's next assignment was neither. In **DRACULA SUCKS** (1979), a hardcore



"Detlef Van Berg" attends to Helga Sven in the Marshak Brothers' production BLUE ICE.

sex comedy directed by Phil Marshak, Reggie played Dr. Van Helsing. His performance in this non-union production was confidentially credited to "Detlef Van Berg." Amazingly, Reggie somehow managed to catapult from the hardcore market into the Walt Disney production **THE DEVIL AND MAX DEVLIN** (1981), in which he played one of Satan's councilmen in Hell, opposite Bill Cosby! In 1982 Nalder was announced as one of the stars of a forthcoming production entitled **THE BOARDING HOUSE**, but it was never made.

It is almost certain that Reggie Nalder's last film was **BLUE ICE** (1985), another hardcore quickie directed by Phil Marshak. The film, which starred Helga Sven and hardcore veterans Herschell Savage, Jacqueline Lorians, and Jamie Gillis, featured "Detlef Van Berg" as (what else?) a renegade Nazi general in search of a mystic book—"Der Bogengeider"—said to contain the formula for a sex drug capable of enslaving all of humanity. Although Reggie sought to conceal the film's existence from his friends and acquaintances, ADAM FILM WORLD awarded the film with "3½ stars," calling it "a wonderful blending of film excesses... S&M, Nazis, and rape... it almost works."

At the time of his death from bone cancer on November 19, 1991, Reggie Nalder had not worked

under his own name for ten years... but he may have had the last laugh.

Reggie's death certificate lists his birthdate as September 4, 1922, but since his passing, a number of photographs from his personal collection—long concealed from his younger friends and acquaintances and reproduced in this issue for the first time—have come to light, proving that Reggie's career as an aspiring young Viennese stage actor was already active in the 1920s—a fact that places his true year of birth closer to 1898-1905. In other words, though his VARIETY obituary estimated his age as 70, Reggie Nalder was actually in his late 80s or 90s!

In retrospect, it seems that Reggie's disfigurement may have protected him from the embarrassment of aging onscreen. After that traumatic change, whatever caused it, his face never changed again. He worked with great artists, achieved at least one classic movie moment that will always be indelibly his, and enjoyed a much longer career than many actors ever know. For as long as villains aim guns on the screen, a little ripple of Reggie Nalder will live on—in every spine he ever turned to ice.

—The author wishes to thank Dwight Grell, David Del Valle and Sam Stetson for helping to inform this appreciation.



Face To Face with Reggie Nalder



Memoir and Interview By David Del Valle

OF ALL THE GENRE personalities I've interviewed or known, Reggie Nalder was the least affected and the one I would call "friend" without hesitation.

In the summer of 1969, while on holiday from college, I found myself on Hollywood Boulevard with a fellow student from Sacramento trying to get to the premiere of **FELLINI SATYRICON**. As fate would have it, we recognized Reggie Nalder walking right in front of us in a pale blue leather jumpsuit, a brown handbag over his shoulder. To me, he was Andrew Bentley from Karloff's **THRILLER** TV show and, of course, the assassin from Hitchcock's remake of **THE MAN WHO KNEW TOO MUCH**. We shadowed him for awhile, noting how everyone that passed him did a double-take to make sure they hadn't seen a

ghost or some half-remembered cinema nightmare. "The face that launched a thousand trips" was the catchphrase we used to describe the effect that Reggie's face had on strangers. He never realized that he was being watched and we returned home amazed that such people walked the earth. Such is youth!

I would not see Reggie Nalder again until 1977, when I attended a party for the Paul Kohner Agency at the Scandia Restaurant on Sunset Boulevard. A German actor named Wolf Roth had just signed with my agency—Del Valle, Franklin and Levine—and he knew I was looking for clients. He suggested that

*Behind the scenes of SALEM'S LOT
with prop head by Jack Young.*

Reggie Nalder, a Kohner client, might be ready for a change. After that first meeting, I saw Reggie on a regular basis for the rest of his life.

In real life, Reggie was a kind, sweet man who had travelled all over the world and spoke four languages, yet his courtly manner and Old World values went unappreciated in the Hollywood of today. He was shy with strangers and rarely gave interviews. He attended every party I ever gave, knew my parents, and was given “Honorary Uncle” status from the beginning. Every Sunday, Reggie and I went to the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences to see screenings of new films; Reggie was a SAG member and I was his guest. Reggie loved French films and action thrillers and attended films constantly.

The subject of how Reggie’s face became disfigured was not easily forthcoming. There were two *official* explanations: 1) Reggie was sitting unaware in an outdoor café in Paris, circa 1938, when a jealous woman he had rebuffed hurled acid at the lower part of his face; 2) His brother Ernst was trapped in a fire and, in an attempt to save him, Reggie’s lower lip and chin were badly burned—and his brother perished in the blaze. Reggie told me both stories at different times; I suspect that there is some truth in both stories. Regardless of how one felt about Reggie’s overall appearance, his eyes were the eyes of “Bambi” and I was always taught the eyes are the windows of the soul—and Reggie’s were a knock-out!

Reggie’s last real professional triumph was in his performance as Mr. Barlow in **SALEM’S LOT** (1979). Warner Bros. sent a limousine for Reggie to attend a special award screening from the Academy of Science Fiction. Richard Kobritz, the producer of the CBS miniseries, also attended and sat at our table. Reggie received his award and managed to thank all concerned, and joked about giving too many bites to co-workers! Reggie was given the kind of star treatment he hadn’t enjoyed since the Hitchcock days.

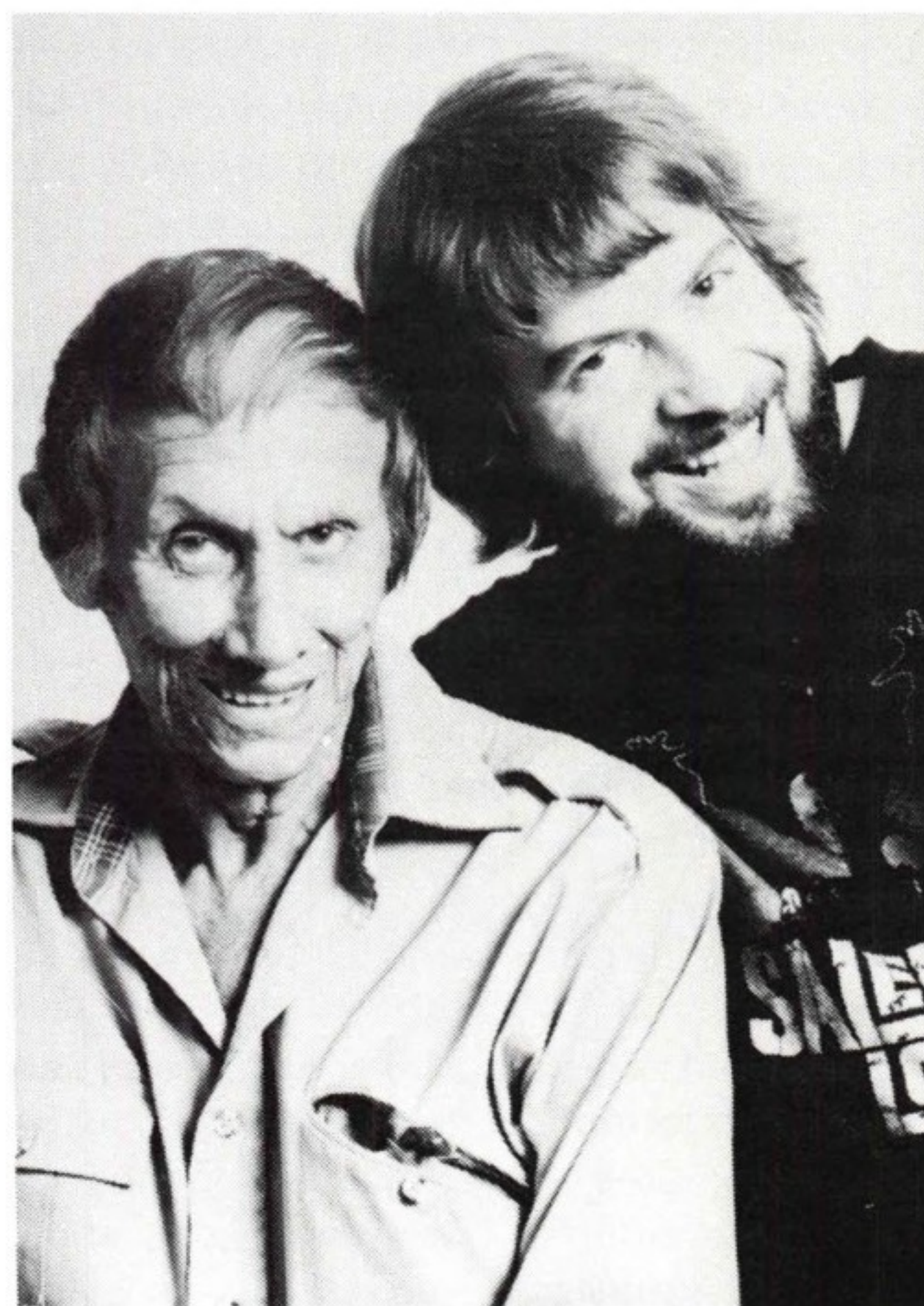
The last time I saw Reggie Nalder was a little over two years ago. He asked me to interview his friend, the Egyptian actor Alex D’Arcy, and the two of them came to my apartment for tea. Alex was looking for someone to help him write his memoir, **THE CURSE OF THE HANDSOME**—about his life in films from 1921 to 1968, when he made **BLOOD OF DRACULA’S CASTLE** for Al Adamson. Reggie sat quietly and listened to all of Alex’s stories as if they were new to him. Reggie looked fine but he was tired, bored with not working more often. He had come to me from the Kohner office hoping for more work, but all of the

projects I found for him fell through, such as **THE BOARDING HOUSE**, which received full-page ads in the Cannes issue of *VARIETY* (5/12/82), but was never financed. This proved to me that a “name cast” is no assurance that money can be raised for a project.

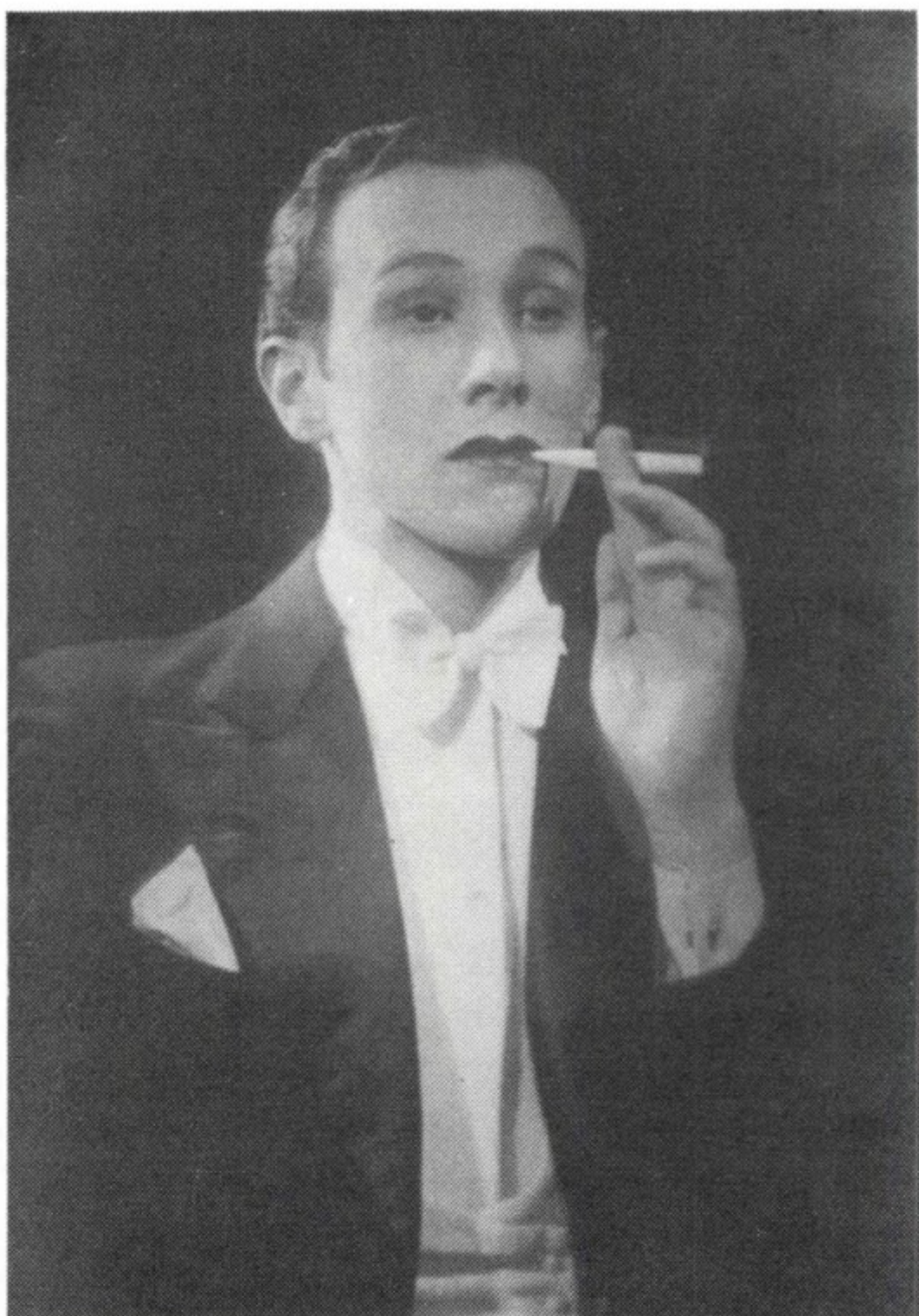
In his later years, Reggie had stopped drinking and smoking, which caused him to withdraw somewhat from his younger circle of friends. In August of 1991, I returned from a trip to San Francisco only to be told about an erased telephone message, supposedly from Reggie, that mentioned something about “throwing in the towel.” I thought this was quite strange, because he almost never used American slang expressions. Shortly thereafter, I was shocked to discover (in the pages of *VARIETY*, of all places) that Reggie Nalder, the mysterious-looking, soft-spoken character actor—my friend—had died of bone cancer on November 19, 1991.

It was not until I was preparing for this issue of *VIDEO WATCHDOG* that I made the acquaintance of Reggie’s closest friend, Dwight Grell. Dwight—who works as the archive curator of the Bolshoi Ballet—met Reggie in the early 1970s and was with him when he died, at a nursing home adjacent to St. John’s Hospital in Santa Monica. Dwight inherited all of Reggie’s professional artifacts, and he has graciously consented to their presentation here, as our collective tribute to one of the great originals of the screen.

This interview—Reggie’s last—was conducted at my home in November of 1988.



*Reggie and David Del Valle,
photographed by Dan Golden.*



Two never-before-seen portraits of the actor as a young man in Vienna, circa mid-1920s.

Tell me about your early background as an actor.

Acting was a family tradition; my father and uncle were both actors. They also produced a very well-known cabaret in Vienna called *Hoelle* ["Hell"] in the basement of the Theater an der Wien in the 1920s. My mother was a great beauty who acted in German films from 1919-1929.

So you had acting in your blood, so to speak?

When you are born into such an environment, you know nothing else. I took dance, ballet, and painting classes and helped my father and uncle to create their cabaret shows by painting backdrops. It was a fantasy world for me, growing up. But that world changed forever when the Nazis came to power. I fled to Paris where all of my theatrical experience was put to the test. I had no money but found work in many places those first few months.

By the time the Nazis came to Paris, I was doing a cabaret of my own. I did Apache dancing, which was considered very risqué for the time, and I also did private performances for those who could afford it. At one time, I employed a hunchback to procure customers for our more exotic shows. Believe me, the movies—even *Visconti's* movies—

cannot depict how corrupt the times were. I had to survive, so I did things that seem like a dream to me now.

Did you also appear in films during this period?

Not really, but I wanted to so much! I did *Le Signal Rouge* with Erich von Stroheim in 1948, which was filmed in Austria with French money. It allowed Mr. von Stroheim the chance to go home to Vienna. So much fanfare—the mayor gave him the keys to the city! He was a genius and highly regarded in Paris. But von Stroheim was only the first of several “geniuses” I would work with...

I also did *Echec au Porteur* (1959) with Jeanne Moreau, a divine actress to work with, kind to cast and crew alike. I loved her. Also *Demain Sera un Autre Jour* [The working title of René Clement's *THE DAY AND THE HOUR* (*Le Jour et l'Heure*).—Ed.] starring Simone Signoret, who was what you Americans call an “earth mother.” She was mad for her husband [Yves Montand], who was unfaithful. And she was always looking out for people like me, who were starting out in films. Simone was all heart. I wish she could have been happier in her private life. I would not meet a



The only known photograph of Hitchcock directing "The Albert Hall Assassin" for THE MAN WHO KNEW TOO MUCH.

woman like her again until Melina Mercouri years later, larger than life. But, unlike Simone, Melina was happy at *all* times.

Weren't you also in THE ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN FABIAN?

Yes, with your great pal Vincent Price! **THE ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN FABIAN** was shot in France in the summer of 1950. It was an amazing film for many reasons. Michelle Presle was the evil woman in the picture and a great friend. She had seen my cabaret act in Paris during the war. Errol Flynn was producing the film and the whole production was centered on him. Well, the cast and crew spent weeks on salary without a frame of film being shot, because Flynn was off being Errol Flynn

and wasting a lot of money. Finally, William Marshall (the director) walked off and Flynn directed the film from that point on. A disaster! Flynn was a great guy—well-liked by the crew—but no film director. It was a paid vacation for all of us. My part was small. I did get to work with a little monkey in that film. I love animals so much but I travel too much to own one.

Let's move on to the film that made you world-famous, THE MAN WHO KNEW TOO MUCH.

Hitchcock was responsible for my coming to America and I owe him a great deal. I didn't realize how much this film would change my life. I am recognized all over the world as "The Man at the Albert Hall."



Awaiting the clash of the cymbals in
THE MAN WHO KNEW TOO MUCH.

Reggie, do you remember when we were at Hughes Market and a man walked up to you and said, "Now I know how many holes it takes to fill the Albert Hall! You're the killer in that movie!"

I never understood that guy. What did he mean, besides recognizing me from the Hitchcock film?

It's a Beatles song lyric; don't worry about it. What do you remember about making the film?

Doris Day was such a pro and Hitchcock gave her little encouragement. She always felt unsure, which is exactly what he wanted. A writer named Donald Spoto asked me about this film and I told him that Hitchcock asked me to regard the man I

was going to assassinate as if he were a beautiful woman, gazing lovingly at the target before I shoot him. What I didn't tell Mr. Spoto was that Hitchcock stared right at my crotch whenever he talked to me, never looking me in the eye. I wondered if he was a pervert at the time. I already knew he was a genius.

I went to all the major cities to open the film and, of course, at the Cannes Film Festival I was a star! That one scene at the Albert Hall is remembered as one of Hitchcock's greatest moments on film.

Next to the shower scene in PSYCHO, it probably is the best known.

After the Hitchcock film, I worked in Hollywood a lot, doing television shows like 77 SUNSET STRIP, SURFSIDE SIX and a feature with Rock Hudson, **THE SPIRAL ROAD** (1962), where I played a witch doctor that guides Hudson out of the jungle. A very nice guy, Rock Hudson. Very polite and professional.

You also did two episodes of Boris Karloff's THRILLER I'll never forget: "Terror in Teakwood" and "The Return of Andrew Bentley."

"Terror in Teakwood" was directed by Paul Henried and starred Guy Rolfe, who was very ill during the filming. He was a nice guy, but weak and pale at the time. I remember the scene where I lead him to the tomb and describe the casket and funeral service to him. When I finished my speech, Paul said "Cut!" and the crew burst into applause. I felt like I had just won the Oscar!

Did you meet Karloff at the time?

No, but I met him briefly during the second one. "The Return of Andrew Bentley" was directed by John Newland—who also played the lead. There was also a very talented actress, Antoinette Bower, with whom I remain good friends today. I had no dialogue, just a black cape and a "familiar" that looked like a man in a furry costume. Newland did needlepoint between takes and loved to gossip. A sweet guy and a fairly good director.

You also did a small role in THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE around this time.

I remember working only one day on that film. Frank Sinatra remembered my face from the Hitchcock film and thought it would complement the other villains. So John Frankenheimer asked for me. I had no dialogue in that one either. About the same time, I remember working on a prison film where I had dialogue and was later redubbed. I hated it.



Retaliating against Yugoslavian actress Olivera Vuco in MARK OF THE DEVIL.

Oh, CONVICTS FOUR (1962) with Ben Gazzara. Vincent Price played an art critic in that.

Yes, that's right. I played one of the prisoners, and I guess my voice wasn't hard or tough enough.

I understand that the Hitchcock film was also responsible for your casting in Dario Argento's first feature, BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE (1969).

I went to Rome to see Argento, who asked for me through my Paris agent. He was a Hitchcock worshipper and had to have me in this film as an assassin who gets killed right away. I enjoyed Argento very much, a strange guy fond of using his hands to direct.

We worked well together. In fact, I was also to have been in **SUSPIRIA** (1977), but Udo Kier took my part because I was about to do **CASANOVA** with Fellini, and Argento said it was only one brief scene. I would love to make another film with him now.

Well, Fellini must be on your list of geniuses that have directed you.

Of course! **CASANOVA** was a dream for me as an actor, but a nightmare for poor Fellini as he was always trying to get money. He is like a child, very sensitive, very aware of all that goes on about him. Fellini brought a big straw hat to the set towards the end of my scenes and pictures were taken of me in

the hat, then with Fellini wearing it. He put his arm around me and hugged me like a bear. I wanted to be around him always.

It was during this period of European activity that you made those two infamous German films, MARK OF THE DEVIL and MARK OF THE DEVIL, PART II.

The first film was the brainchild of my late friend, Adrian Hoven, who produced both films and directed the second. In truth, Adrian directed them both. Poor Mike Armstrong, who wrote the script for Part One, arrived from England to Austria without any idea how to direct a movie. Michael and Adrian also didn't like each other at all. So after a couple of weeks, Mike was removed and Adrian shot most of it. Herbert Lom arrived on the set and his presence alone made everyone work better. Little Udo Kier played his helper. It gave me great pleasure to see my name on the marquees on Hollywood Boulevard. I even took a photo of it—**MARK OF THE DEVIL** starring Reggie Nalder!

I know Michael Armstrong, Reggie, and for the sake of film history, I should tell you his side of things. Mike wrote a script in which the Herbert Lom character is sexually impotent and becomes frustrated and begins to lust for Udo Kier, thus his motive for torturing beautiful women. Your character, Albino, is killed by Lom because you know the truth. According to Mike, Hoven didn't like the gay subplot and rewrote it. So poor Mike was out on both levels.

The film made so much money for Hoven, it's too bad that Mike and he couldn't have been more in tune. But, honestly, he wasn't up to directing a feature film and knew it.

Speaking of "gay subplots," I remember this very well-endowed actress—Olivera Vuco, the one I try to rape at the inn—wanted to make love to Udo Kier, and all through the filming she would appear at night in his room. Since he was gay, she was frustrated all the time! When we did our scene together, I was supposed to overpower her. Well, this big woman almost overpowered me!

Wasn't Sybil Danning supposed to be in MARK OF THE DEVIL II? You both seemed to be old pals at my Christmas party a while back.

Oh, yes, I like Sybil. She's a fun lady. Well, Adrian Hoven was married at the time and had a roving eye for beautiful women. He began a relationship with Sybil that was so hot, he had a heart attack trying to keep up with her. He also gave her all of his antique

furniture for her apartment in Vienna. His wife discovered this and demanded that the furniture be returned, or she would get a divorce. That ended any possibility of filming with her. I wish she had been in the film.

The second one had Anton Diffring instead of Herbert Lom. What else do you recall of it?

The second **MARK OF THE DEVIL** went very smoothly. Tony Diffring was a close friend of mine and I loved working with him. It was our only film together. There was a scene of me having sex with a nun that was cut, as well as more violence towards nuns, much more explicit than anything in **THE DEVILS**. A fan sent me a video tape of **MARK OF THE DEVIL, PART II** and I was amazed how much we shot that didn't make it. Like a nun impaled on a giant wooden phallus until blood is everywhere.

Sounds like those vomit bags went to the wrong movie! You also did a Dracula film with Albert Band. How was that?

ZOLTAN, HOUND OF DRACULA was okay. Albert Band was a nice guy to work with, and Joe [José] Ferrer was great—we felt embarrassed for awhile. I don't have dialogue for most of the film, just in flashback. It was almost impossible to make those dogs look evil. I also did an episode of **McCLOUD**, with John Carradine as Dracula. I played his butler.

Speaking of TV movies, Curtis Harrington told me that he fought like a tiger with NBC to cast you in THE DEAD DON'T DIE.

Curtis is a good friend, and I suppose he did. I remember Joan Blondell very well. She was very frail when we shot the scene where I'm lying dead in the shop. After a take, she whispered to me, "I can't get up." She had knelt by my side and could not get up. George Hamilton was a pro, too. My rising from the coffin to get him is very effective, thanks to our friend Curtis—a real master.

SALEM'S LOT was also done for television, but a shorter version was released abroad as a theatrical film. It probably got you the most recognition of any of your American work. What do you remember about the filming?

I had met James Mason before at a film festival. He is one of the best actors around, here or in Europe; a joy to work with. Tobe Hooper was keen on using me from the start. The makeup and contact lenses I had to wear were rough at first, but I liked the money best of all!!! The scene where David Soul stakes me took forever to shoot because Tobe didn't like the



Feasting with Jane Wyatt, DeForrest Kelley, Mark Lenard, and William Shatner in the STAR TREK episode "Journey to Babel."

way I died, so we did many takes of that scene. I haven't seen the short version, but my scenes weren't affected by the cuts.

Didn't you also play the Devil in Disney's THE DEVIL AND MAX DEVLIN, with Bill Cosby?

Yes, the Devil. I went out to Disney to read for that one and once again I had a few lines to say. I *hated* working for Bill Cosby; he is a real pig. I first met him in Rome, where I did an episode of I SPY. Bill Cosby is rude, arrogant, and very untalented. He walked right by me on the set, as if I were a piece of furniture. I tried to be polite, but he made it impossible. I rarely have worked with anyone like him, before or since.

We should also mention your STAR TREK episode, "Journey to Babel," because we attended the 20th Anniversary party on the Paramount backlot.

Yes! I was in shock that so many people remembered things so trivial! When we arrived, I didn't even have to tell them my name. The boy at the door knew my episode, my real name, and the name of my character on the show! The real surprise was seeing more stars assembled in one place than at any premiere I'd ever been to. It was like the old Hollywood, when I wore a tux to the opening of **THE MAN WHO KNEW TOO MUCH** back in 1956.

I know this is a sensitive subject, but didn't you do another "Dracula" film before

DRACULA'S DOG?

You *would* bring up my sex films, you horrible little creature!

Well, they are part of your career. So what do you remember about DRACULA SUCKS?

This experience was very nerve-wracking for me. The Marshak Brothers wrote the script in pencil on large sheets of white paper, handing the sheets to us seconds before we did a take. No one knew their lines because they were being changed all the time. We were all staying in a small motel in Palmdale, and people were going in and out of each others' rooms all night long—a very randy place. John Holmes was in the film but he stayed on the castle set. He was like a huge snake in repose, if you know what I mean.

You weren't credited as Reggie Nalder on that one, were you?

No, I was called "Detlef Van Berg," but everybody knows it's me. I don't care. It was work and the Marshaks seemed happy with it.

We also found out about another one called BLUE ICE. What's that about?

What do you think? Sex, of course! It's set at the time of the Nazis. I play a Nazi general who likes to watch sex acts. We shot **BLUE ICE** in San Francisco over two weekends, so it was like a vacation for me, but you must promise never to see this picture.





Reggie Nalder Videography

THE ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN FABIAN, 1951, NTA Home Video, \$39.95 (OP)

THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE, 1970, Video Communications #9002, \$19.95;
Image Entertainment, \$39.95 (LB/LD)

BLUE ICE, 1985, Caballero Video

THE DAY AND THE HOUR, 1963, Movies Unlimited # 27-6259 (6736 Castor Ave., Phila PA, 19149), \$24.99

THE DEAD DON'T DIE, 1975, Worldvision Video #4019, \$49.95

THE DEVIL AND MAX DEVLIN, 1981, Walt Disney Home Video, \$69.95 (OP)

DRACULA SUCKS, 1979, Media Home Entertainment, \$59.95 (OP); Unicorn Video #9220, \$59.95

DRACULA'S DOG, 1978, Video Communications #6202, \$19.95

THE MAN WHO KNEW TOO MUCH, 1955, MCA Universal #80129, \$19.95;
MCA/Universal, \$34.95 (LD)

THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE, 1962, MGM/UA Home Video #801369, \$19.95;
MGM/UA Home Video, \$39.95 (LD)

MARK OF THE DEVIL, 1969, Vestron Video #9588, \$69.95 (OP);
TZ Video, \$29.95; Video Dimensions, \$29.95 (LB)

MARK OF THE DEVIL, PART TWO, 1972, Video Dimensions, \$29.95

SALEM'S LOT: THE MOVIE, 1979, Warner Home Video #11336, \$19.95

SALEM'S LOT: THE MINISERIES, 1979, Warner Home Video #12717, \$29.98

STAR TREK: JOURNEY TO BABEL, 1967, Paramount Home Video #60040-44, \$12.95

ZOLTAN, HOUND OF DRACULA, 1978, HBO Video #91613, \$69.95 (OP)



DR. JEKYLLS & MR. HYDES

The Silent Years

By Paul M. Jensen



TWO OF THE BEST-KNOWN

film versions of **DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE** have recently appeared on video in good-quality, restored versions. At last, one can view John Barrymore's legendary 1920 performance at the proper projection speed on Kino International's tape, and—at last—one can see *all* the scenes that won Fredric March a 1931/1932 Academy Award on tape and disc from MGM/UA. These releases encourage a fresh encounter with both films.

The inclusion on Kino's Barrymore tape of a 1912 one-reel version, and the presence in Sinister Cinema's catalog of a 1913 two-reel version and a second 1920 feature, help to fill out the history of this story's early screen life. These tapes send the curious viewer back to Richard Mansfield's seminal stage adaptation and Robert Louis Stevenson's novel, to explore the filmmakers' sources and evaluate their faithfulness. The result is a surprisingly logical evolution away from the actual details of Stevenson's story until, in 1931,¹ we find relatively few of the original's events and a distinctly modern outlook, but also—paradoxically—a subtle grasp of the essence of Stevenson's vision.

In Robert Louis Stevenson's short novel, first published in 1886, the story of Dr. Henry Jekyll is discovered through Gabriel John Utterson, a lawyer, who accumulates bits of information which lead to the climactic revelation about Jekyll's transformation into Hyde. Utterson serves as the reader's surrogate and guide, with the title character(s) encountered only indirectly until, in the final chapter, a letter offers Jekyll's posthumous explanation of events. This approach permits Stevenson to leave out many plot details. He is especially vague about the "undignified" pleasures which attract Hyde.

In the first chapter, Utterson's cousin, Richard Enfield, tells him of seeing a man trample a young girl; the man, offering reparations to the girl's father, ducked into a doorway, then emerged with a check

signed by someone else. This anecdote disturbs Utterson, because he knows that the door leads to a laboratory bordering a courtyard which leads to the house of Dr. Jekyll, one of his own clients. It also reminds Utterson of Jekyll's will, which leaves everything to one Edward Hyde. Seeking to learn more, Utterson visits Dr. Lanyon, but Lanyon has seen little of Jekyll since he became "too fanciful." Utterson lingers near the door and eventually spots Hyde; when he questions Jekyll's butler, Poole, Utterson is told that Hyde has a key.

Two weeks later, Utterson dines with Jekyll, who calls Lanyon a "hide-bound pedant." He also declares that he can be rid of Hyde anytime he chooses. Jekyll makes Utterson promise that if anything happens to him, Hyde will receive what he is legally due.

Nearly a year later, a servant witnesses Hyde's brutal clubbing of Sir Danvers Carew, a Member of Parliament and "an aged and beautiful gentleman." Utterson recognizes the murder weapon as a walking stick he had once given to Jekyll. Accompanying the police to Hyde's Soho address, Utterson finds him gone and the place ransacked.

Utterson visits Jekyll and finds the doctor's manner "feverish." Jekyll admits, "I have lost confidence in myself," and adds that Hyde "will nevermore be heard of." Meanwhile, Utterson's head clerk, a handwriting expert, concludes that Hyde's writing resembles that of Jekyll. For more than two months Hyde goes unseen, and Jekyll appears at peace. Suddenly, Jekyll isolates himself. At about the same time, Lanyon has an encounter with Jekyll that so shocks him that within a week he dies, but only after sending Utterson a letter, to be opened only upon the death or disappearance of Jekyll. Later, while walking with Enfield, Utterson sees Jekyll peering from his window; he appears ill, terrified, and in despair.

*The face of Evil itself: John Barrymore in
DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE (1920).*



Several weeks later, Poole asks Utterson for help. The voice that has been sending him in search of a certain drug is not his master's, and he fears foul play. When Utterson and Poole break into the laboratory, they find the dead body of Hyde, with poison nearby. There is a letter from Jekyll, which Utterson is to read after Lanyon's.

Dr. Lanyon's letter recounts the shocking event that brought on his death. A note from Jekyll had asked him to fetch a drawer and its contents from the laboratory and at midnight to give them to a stranger who will visit. He does so, but when Hyde arrives, Lanyon holds him at gunpoint, refusing to let him leave without assurance of Jekyll's safety. Hyde mixes and drinks a potion, and Lanyon sees him become Jekyll.

Jekyll's letter provides a general overview of his motives and actions. Believing that "man is not truly one, but truly two," he decides to separate these elements. After drinking the potion, he feels "younger, lighter, happier in body" with "a heady recklessness, a current of disordered sensual images." The laboratory contains no mirror, so he crosses to the main house to view his new self. Wondering if he will be able to change back, he returns to the lab and does so.

Hyde established a residence in Soho, and Jekyll enjoys this opportunity for self-indulgence "apart from ordinary laws, and... conscience." As he does so, the initially small and slightly built Hyde becomes taller and stronger. One night Jekyll goes to bed and awakens the next morning as Hyde. The balance of power has shifted: once it had been hard to shed the body of Jekyll, but now it is hard to regain it. Afraid, Jekyll holds Hyde in check until, in an "hour of moral weakness," he takes the drug and, because Hyde "had been long caged, he came out roaring."

That night, Hyde kills Carew. Again seeking to restrain his alter ego, Jekyll is tempted—in his own form—to be "an ordinary secret sinner." One day, seated on a bench in Regent's Park, he thinks of his good deeds as making him better than other men. These "vainglorious" thoughts prompt a spontaneous change to Hyde.

From here on, Jekyll is less and less able to stay in control. If he sleeps, he always awakens as Hyde, "boiling with causeless hatreds" and "lusting to inflict pain." Running low on the chemical, Jekyll sends Poole to seek more, until he realizes that the first supply had worked only because it had been impure. After taking the last dose, he anticipates a final, permanent change to Hyde. He wonders if Hyde will "find courage to release himself" through suicide. (Evidently, he does.)

Despite Stevenson's wariness about specifying Hyde's decadent activities, the characterization of

Jekyll (and Hyde) is a rich and complex one. It also is not the one that most people envision. Jekyll is not simply a good man who becomes evil when he changes to Hyde; the two are not opposites. Instead, Jekyll's living of a double life through Hyde is an extreme version of a division that already existed within the doctor.

Throughout his life, Jekyll combined "a certain impatient gaiety of disposition," which led him to indulge in inappropriate pleasures, with an "imperious desire to carry my head high." Because of "the exacting nature of my aspirations" and "an almost morbid sense of shame," Jekyll concealed his pleasures, creating a life of duplicity that divided the normal blend of good and evil. "I was no more myself when I laid aside restraint and plunged in shame than when I labored... at the furtherance of knowledge or the relief of sorrow and suffering."

Stevenson does not present Hyde as a contrast to Jekyll. He is, instead, one of the two alternative personalities (good and evil) into which Jekyll could have been separated. As Hyde, he is "wholly evil," but otherwise, he is "still the old Henry Jekyll, that incongruous compound of whose reformation and improvement I had already learned to despair." If he had approached his experiment with a more noble aim, Jekyll speculates, he might have become "an angel instead of a fiend."

In a further attempt to establish that the Hyde-nature emerges from humanity's everyday reality, Stevenson has Utterson—the reader's surrogate—reveal, in a less extreme form, some of Jekyll's duality. When Poole mentions Jekyll's wild youth, Utterson recalls "the many ill things" he himself had done and those he had barely avoided. Later, as he accompanies the police to Hyde's lodgings, Utterson feels "some touch of that terror of the law and the law's officers which may at times assail the most honest." If this can be true of the basically good and normal Utterson, it could be true of anyone!

The popular actor Richard Mansfield (1854-1907), already famous for playing somewhat grotesque characters, was immediately drawn to Stevenson's story. Within a year of the novel's publication, he had T. Russell Sullivan create a stage adaptation in which he would star. After a trial performance in Boston on May 9, 1887, the work was premiered the following September 12, at New York's Madison Square Theater. It rapidly became the most popular production of his repertory company. He played the role in London in 1888, and it remained the centerpiece of his career until his death.

Recognizing the need to give Stevenson's fragments a more traditional dramatic structure, Russell and Mansfield made two decisions which would affect future film versions of the story. First, they positioned Jekyll/Hyde as the central character, which severely reduced Utterson's importance to the plot, and they arranged events in chronological order. As a result, aspects of Jekyll's life had to be added, so that Stevenson's incidents would tie together. In doing so, they made their second significant decision: to expand the character of Carew from a walk-on victim, who is killed for reasons Stevenson never reveals, to General Sir Danvers Carew, a major character with a daughter, Agnes, to whom Jekyll is engaged. This made for a more tightly knit series of relationships and contrasts.

According to a contemporary review (NEW YORK TIMES, May 10, 1887, page 5), the play opens as Jekyll visits the Carews, but is called away on business. Hyde then sneaks into the house and is confronted by Carew, whom Hyde strangles to death. Act II shows Hyde's flight and escape. Act III features Hyde's midnight encounter with Lanyon, in which he changes to Jekyll. Act IV climaxes with Jekyll's death in his laboratory; in this act, Jekyll is seen changing into Hyde. Even though it presents events directly, this plot structure retains Stevenson's mystery-story approach, with both the explanation of Jekyll's situation and the dramatic transformations themselves delayed until late in the play.

Mansfield had originally planned to play Jekyll the way Stevenson described him, as a large, kindly, middle-aged man. However, because Jekyll "thoroughly comprehends his own power for evil," Mansfield felt the character should be more somber and quiet than cheerful (NEW YORK TIMES, April 28, 1895, II, page 12). The fact that the play does not introduce Jekyll until after he has begun changing into Hyde makes this choice inevitable. Mansfield's Jekyll is also younger than Stevenson's and has a love interest, which probably resulted more from the 33-year-old actor's vanity than anything else.

Stevenson had stressed other people's reactions to Hyde rather than descriptions of his actual appearance: Hyde "gave an impression of deformity without any nameable malformation." Mansfield was faithful to this vision of Hyde, for he avoided changes in make-up and costume. His Jekyll "differs from Hyde only in manner, voice, and facial expression." (NEW YORK TIMES, September 11, 1887, page 2)

According to Edgar Norton, who joined Mansfield's company in 1898 and played the role of Poole off-and-on for three years,² Mansfield's Hyde was more suggestive than explicit. "All of his Hyde scenes



Richard Mansfield as Jekyll and Hyde in an undated promotional photo for his classic stage performance.

were played in subdued light. A green spotlight on his face and the red glare from a fireplace was almost all of the illumination on him. For this reason the audience had only a vague impression of the monster. Mansfield would draw one hand up into his sleeve, making it seem dwarfed. He would stretch the other hand far out of the sleeve and spread it so that it seemed immense. He walked on his toes, bounding across the stage." (NEW YORK TIMES, January 3, 1932, VIII, page 6)

The fame of Mansfield's version of DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE made his name synonymous with the character during the twenty years he played it, and long after. Anyone preparing a film version would be as aware of it as of the original novel.³

The Thanhouser Film Corporation's one-reel abbreviation of **DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE** appeared in January, 1912. Burdened by brevity, this 10m film spends little time on exposition. Almost immediately we see Jekyll (James Cruze) mix his drug and change into Hyde. The next two shots establish his courtship of the minister's daughter (Marguerite Snow). The rest of the film consists of four loosely connected turning points and climaxes.



*James Cruze as the screen's first Jekyll, in Thanhouser's 1912 version.
In later years, actor Harry Benham claimed to have portrayed Mr. Hyde in this 10m short.*

A title declares that, due to repeated use of the drug, Jekyll starts to change against his will. After this happens, Hyde runs outside. A young girl, presumably trampled by Hyde, lies on the sidewalk. Returning to the laboratory, Hyde takes the drug and becomes Jekyll again.

Later, while he is with the minister's daughter, Jekyll feels the change coming on again. He flees to the church steps, so that she won't see what happens. As Hyde, he shakes his fist at the church, then attacks the heroine. Her father (Harry Benham) arrives and, as the two men fight, the woman fetches a policeman. Hyde beats the minister to death with a cane, then is chased. When the police arrive at the door, it is Jekyll who greets them.

Because he can no longer control himself, Jekyll tells the heroine that he is going away. The next title states that Jekyll has no more of the drug. In the laboratory he changes to Hyde for the last time and starts smashing bottles. Afraid for his master, a servant gets the police and, as they break down the door, the trapped Hyde takes poison and dies.

Cinematically, this film—directed by Lucius Henderson—is more limited than many of D.W. Griffith's contemporaneous Biograph films. The entire scene in which Jekyll mixes the drug, drinks, changes to Hyde, drinks again, and changes back to

Jekyll is presented in a single, uninterrupted long shot. Each of these transformations is accomplished through a rapid dissolve as the character sits with his head lowered. No other transformations are shown. In one case, Jekyll opens a door to leave his study and, in the next shot, emerges into the laboratory as Hyde. All other times, the change occurs during a cutaway shot of some other character.

The film is worth a look, but not much more.

The version of **DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE** produced in 1913 by Carl Laemmle's IMP (Universal) company is, at two reels, twice the length of Henderson's film, but it is more than twice as interesting. It includes most of the key events from the book, but in the form of a fairly developed story with a variety of settings, not just an abrupt series of "highlights." The direction by Herbert Brenon reveals some creativity and star King Baggot offers a reasonably distinctive performance. The film's chief deviation from Stevenson's original, one that it shares with the Thanhouser version, is its simplification of the main character(s): Jekyll is presented as totally good, while Hyde is "demon souled" and "evil."

The first scene introduces Jekyll's beloved, Alice (Jane Gail) and her father (Matt Snyder). [The father's

name and profession are not identified, but the character is clearly derived from Mansfield and Russell's version of General Carew.] A note arrives from Jekyll, canceling an opera date and suggesting that Alice attend with her father, instead. He explains that his "charity patients need to be attended to." Meanwhile, according to a title, "Dr. Lanyon and Lawyer Utterson ridicule Dr. Jekyll for his unheard of experiments," but we cannot tell how much they really know about them. The visitors leave and Jekyll treats an elderly woman, then turns down her offer of payment. On their way to the opera, Alice and her father stop in to see Jekyll, who is obviously pleased. After they leave, Jekyll admits another patient. This appears to be the first time in any adaptation that Jekyll has been explicitly linked with charity work—an addition which the next four films would retain.

"In the dead silence of the night," announces a title, "Dr. Jekyll plans to set free his evil self." The film takes this plan completely for granted, making no attempt to explain Jekyll's motivations. We join Jekyll with the potion already prepared, but at least the staging of what follows takes the time to dramatize the situation and to imply a bit of characterization. Instead of just drinking the liquid, Jekyll puts down the glass, rises from his chair, and crosses the room to lock the door. Returning to the table, he raises the glass, then pauses and places one hand on his heart; he brings the glass almost to his lips, but has second thoughts and lowers it back to the table. With both hands against his chest, he looks around, uncertain. Finally, he again picks up the glass and drinks. These delays build up the event's impact and reveal Jekyll's natural wariness.

Once Jekyll changes to Hyde, that character is given enough bits of business that the viewer has a good chance to study him: Hyde picks up an object from the table and drops it, moves to a window in the background and looks out, puts on a hat and grabs his walking stick, opens the door, then stops and returns to a desk, where he writes a note. Only then does he leave the laboratory. In the waiting room, he presents the note, signed by Jekyll, to the servants: it identifies the bearer as "my best friend" and adds, "Treat him as myself." When the disconcerted servants retreat into the consulting room, Hyde sets off to discover his new life.

Hyde disrupts the dancing at a working class pub, then rents a room at a lodging house. We see a boy with a crutch walking along a street and Hyde grabs him from behind, wrestles him to the ground, and starts to beat him with his stick. This deliberate attack on a poor, crippled child makes a nice contrast to Jekyll's earlier concern for a charity patient with a cane. A man enters and stops the beating. When a

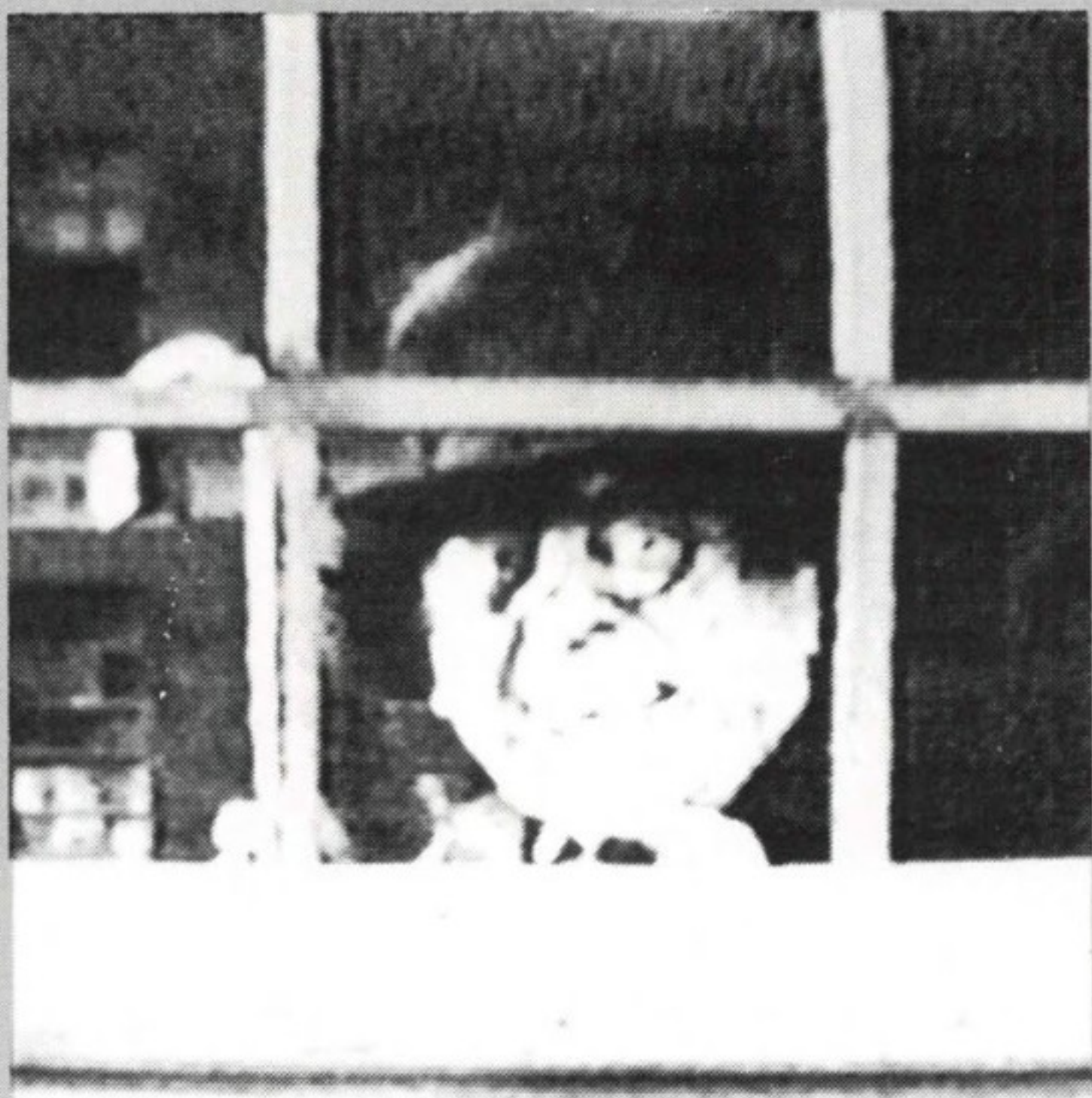
crowd gathers, Hyde takes the man inside and sends him off with a bag of money. He then mixes the potion and changes back to Jekyll.

The title ("Never again shall I tempt fate") introduces an unexpectedly cinematic and subtly mature sequence. Jekyll, seated in his consulting room, extends his arms as if reaching for something unattainable. There follows a medium close shot of Alice gazing sadly out of her window. The juxtaposition of these two shots explains Jekyll's gesture and links the characters' mutual, separate longings. After we return to Jekyll, arms still outstretched, he changes spontaneously to Hyde, in a surprising suggestion that Jekyll's desire for Alice stirs the Hydean urges within him. The filmmakers' awareness of the importance of these shots is implied by the care taken with them: most of the film's night shots were filmed in daylight, with the expectation of adding a blue tint later, but here Jekyll and Alice are shown in shadow, with natural sidelighting that molds their figures and sets an appropriate mood. From this point on, Jekyll never voluntarily becomes Hyde.

In the presence of Lanyon and Utterson, Jekyll writes a new will, leaving everything to Hyde "in case of my death or disappearance." When the two friends leave, Alice enters. As she and Jekyll interact, he clutches his heart and staggers, feeling the change to Hyde begin. Worried, Alice hurries outside and stops Lanyon and Utterson. Looking up, they see Hyde through a window. A few moments later, though, Jekyll appears at the same window. Less worried now, the three observers depart; inside, Jekyll collapses in sobs.

"Dr. Jekyll is a martyr to science," declares a title. He and Alice stroll near a church and he becomes distraught when a choir procession passes. At the front of Alice's house, Jekyll again acts weak and clutches his head. After Alice enters to get a glass of water for him, Jekyll runs off. A few moments later, Alice's father arrives and Hyde grabs him from behind. The people in the house, hearing the commotion, rush out and find the father's dead body on the steps. After a brief chase, Hyde sends a note to Lanyon: "Get for me the boxes in my table drawer... My messenger will call at midnight." Lanyon obeys and Hyde, mixing the drug, changes back to Jekyll in front of his friend.

Jekyll reveals his remorse when, at the front of Alice's house, he pauses to stare at the steps where her father's body had been. Then, as he starts to enter, he grabs his heart and changes to Hyde. When Alice comes out, Hyde flees (instead of attacking her, which might have been expected). Utterson, a servant, and a growing mob pursue Hyde to the lodging house. They are about to batter



King Baggot on Video

DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE

1913, *Sinister Cinema*, \$19.00 ppd.,
26m 47s (20 fps)

This exclusive copy of King Baggot's IMP (Universal) version contains no music track and no color tinting. As a result, some night scenes filmed during the day look like day scenes. The print quality is clear and sharp, with some blotches and occasional overexposure. Inserts of letters on a white background are unsteady.

The main titles include no production credits. There is also no title to introduce the actors playing Alice and her father. On three occasions, missing footage results in abrupt continuity: Jekyll's first involuntary change to Hyde is left unresolved; a few seconds are missing when Alice arrives after Jekyll writes his new will; just after Lanyon obtains the drugs for Hyde, a shot of a policeman noticing something is left unresolved; and a shot of Hyde huddling at Lanyon's door cuts immediately to Hyde preparing to drink the potion in front of Lanyon.

Sinister's tape is preceded with trailers for three other variations on the theme: Hammer's **HOUSE OF FRIGHT** (1961), **DR. JEKYLL AND SISTER HYDE** (1972), and Victor Fleming's MGM version of 1941.

—Paul M. Jensen

down the door, when Dr. Jekyll opens it and calmly greets them.

Some time later, in his laboratory, Jekyll again changes to Hyde, who then tries to regain Jekyll's form by mixing the drug. In an illustration of the way the film develops a situation, Hyde doesn't just run out of the drug; instead, after mixing the last of the powder, he spills the liquid. Unable to find any more, he tells a servant to purchase some, but she returns without any. Lanyon and Utterson arrive and, hearing Hyde crashing about in the lab, they break the door open and find Hyde dead on the floor. (No reason is established for Hyde's demise.) After Hyde's body is covered with a blanket, Alice enters; she removes the blanket, revealing Jekyll's body. A shot of her embracing Jekyll is intercut with a church bell tolling.

The film's six changes from Jekyll to Hyde employ a variety of methods. Jekyll's first transformation occurs in a straightforward dissolve from one figure to the other. From then on, all of Jekyll's changes are involuntary, and so Brenon and Baggot stress the early stages of each change, and therefore its impact on Jekyll, instead of simply offering a sudden, complete transformation. The first of these scenes does use a dissolve, but only after Jekyll notices his hands and arms moving differently. The next instance has Jekyll bring his hands to his face, then start to crouch and writhe; the final stages of the change occur during a cutaway shot. The same approach is used during the fourth change, at Alice's house. The next change, also at Alice's house, combines initial acting with a dissolve to Hyde. The last change, in the laboratory, occurs in full view, without a dissolve: Jekyll's hands and arms grow spastic, he faces away from the camera with his head down, then he turns into view again with the Hyde wig on. (There is a jump cut in the film as Baggot faces away, but it may not be intentional.)

The changes back from Hyde to Jekyll usually occur off-screen. During the main exception, when he changes in front of Lanyon, Hyde drinks the potion with his back turned, bends over (so we cannot see Baggot dropping his hat and wig) and rises as Jekyll. This scene, like Jekyll's final change to Hyde, probably resembles a contemporary stage performance, but it has the virtue of placing emphasis on acting and the character, rather than on abrupt technical effects. The ingenious final return to Jekyll's form occurs under the blanket in a single shot (although, again, there is an almost imperceptible jump cut, which was probably not part of a trick effect).

Cinematically, this film shares one characteristic with the Thanhouser version of the previous year: almost every shot is distant enough to show the entire area in which the action occurs. The only exceptions

are two close-ups of Hyde at the dance hall window and one medium close shot of Alice. However, the director avoids a static feeling by frequently intercutting between locations. In addition, he reveals some skill at shifting the actors' positions within the frame, even making use of depth. For example, when we first meet Lanyon, Utterson, and Jekyll, one of the men walks to a window in the background, then returns to the front; later, when Jekyll and Alice kiss, her father discreetly steps into the distance and turns away.

More importantly, the director and star mix plot events and chase scenes with moments of repose, such as when Jekyll stares at the spot where the father's body had been, which develop mood and the character's feelings.

King Baggot's Jekyll is hardly more distinctive than those of Cruze and Lewis, but his Hyde stands out as imaginatively conceived, despite the similar use of buck teeth and a mop of unkempt hair. Baggot's knees and back bend sharply into a squat, reducing his height by nearly half, and he walks with a crippled waddle. Like a spastic, he has trouble controlling his hands and arms, often dropping objects when he tries to pick them up. Stumbling into and climbing over furniture, he is in constant, hyperactive motion. In the climax of this energetic, physically demanding performance, Hyde grabs the laboratory's window curtains and when they pull loose he crashes down; dying, he sprawls onto a table, then rolls off onto the floor, landing forcefully on his back.

From the start, Baggot's Hyde clearly enjoys distressing people, especially women. After Jekyll's servants cringe at their first sight of him, Hyde makes matters worse by shouting and waving his arms at them. In the dance hall, he waddles about the room, staring closely at the disturbed customers, then abruptly grabs at a woman. Later, at the lodging house, the wary landlady keeps her distance, so Hyde grabs at her, too, thereby hastening her exit. During a chase scene, Hyde takes time out to make a gratuitous grab at a passing female. These actions are not so much sexual attacks as a compulsive, impish desire to create discomfort. Baggot's Hyde may not be subtly perceptive, but he is consistent and unexpectedly memorable.

While certainly not a rediscovered classic, this version of the story has merit and looks especially respectable when compared to either the 1912 film or the 1920 Pioneer production.

In 1920, the Pioneer Film Corporation released a feature-length adaptation of Stevenson's story set in the present. This unexpected updating has no



Sheldon Lewis on Video

DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE

1920, *Sinister Cinema*, \$19.00 ppd.,
39m 23s (24 fps)

As with Sinister's 1913 version, their copy of the Pioneer Film Corporation with Sheldon Lewis contains no musical accompaniment and no color tinting. As a result, several night scenes filmed during the day look like day scenes. Print quality is tolerable. The main titles include no production credits. The fast projection speed prevents the action from looking as natural as it might. Due to overscanning, the bottom line is lost on several intertitles. The image is occasionally unsteady.

Kino International's tape of the John Barrymore version features a postscript including two excerpts from this film: Hyde's change to Jekyll after setting the fire, and Jekyll's involuntary change to Hyde, along with the confrontation with Bernice that follows. (The tape makes no distinction between these two excerpts and refers to them as a single "transformation scene.") Running 4m 54s, Kino's footage is shown at the proper speed of 20 fps, with a piano score, but without tints. It functions as a satisfactory sample of the film's style.

—Paul M. Jensen

meaningful effect on the plot or situations, but it does permit the budget-conscious use of real locations, which are photographed, it would appear, only with natural light. The result is less like a Neorealist horror film than a Roger Corman quickie, though there is some novelty value in seeing the heroine drive an automobile and play golf. The direction by Charles J. Hayden relies mostly on long shots and is not much more cinematic than the 1912 film. Only one scene—of Hyde, in a dark room, illuminated by a blazing fireplace—has any visual atmosphere at all. The editing and plot development are often awkward, and sometimes incoherent.

Dr. Jekyll (Sheldon Lewis) devotes his time and energy to a free clinic for poor children. One girl, lying in a coma, suffers from “a strange malady” which distracts him more than usual from his fiancée, Bernice (Gladys Field), the niece of Doctor and Mrs. Lanyon; he misses dinner at the Lanyons’ (“as usual”) and thinks about the patient while Bernice plays the piano for him.

When Bernice arrives to keep a golf date, Jekyll begs off, preferring to work on his theory that man has two natures, good and evil. She urges him to reject such “morbid thoughts” and to “let God’s sunshine into your heart”—presumably at the Country Club. Instead, he promises her a “box party at the Opera” the next night.

A title announces his “success” with the patient, but all we see is a shot of Jekyll carrying the child. This vague pseudo-climax is followed by his mixing and drinking the potion that changes him to Hyde. The juxtaposition of these two events suggests a relationship, but none is evident. The laboratory scene itself is abruptly matter-of-fact, with no build-up to the taking of the drug. The actual transformation to Hyde is disappointingly side-stepped, for it happens during an arbitrary cutaway shot of Jekyll’s servant.

A title refers to Hyde as an “Apostle from Hell,” but his actions are rather tame. After grabbing a woman, dragging her into a vacant lot, and forcing her to the ground, all he does is run off with her purse. Later, he tries to set fire to a building, but is overpowered by some men. Two policemen escort him around a corner, out of sight; shortly after, Hyde runs back from around the same corner, with the director not bothering to show how he got away. As the chase continues, Hyde hides in a trunk. A shot of him getting out of the trunk is followed by one of him emerging through a manhole in the street, an instance of rather peculiar continuity. At the laboratory, he changes back to Jekyll, as a cutaway to the police hides the transformation.

Distraught, Jekyll prays, “Save me from the penalty of my unbelief,” but this attitude is

contradicted by the next scene, in which Jekyll rents a room for Hyde. Jekyll has missed the box party at the opera and Bernice has had enough; she writes him a letter, breaking their engagement. When he visits her to explain, he finds she is now engaged to Danvers Carew (Leslie Austin), a childhood chum. In despair, Jekyll changes to Hyde and seeks revenge by setting fire to a building, though it is not clear what building it is, or how it is related to Bernice. His deed, though, permits the director to use stock footage of firefighters and a burning building. Back at the lab, Hyde regains the safety of Jekyll’s form.

A title states that Jekyll, remorseful, seeks atonement by changing his will; however, he leaves everything to Edward Hyde, which hardly counts as a sign of remorse. Afterward, Jekyll’s attorney, Utterson (Harold Forshay), leaves his walking stick behind. Lurking outside the Lanyon’s house, Hyde sees Carew with Bernice; when she leaves the room, Hyde enters and beats Carew to death with the stick. Later, the police confront Utterson with the weapon. He admits that it’s his, and cannot recall when he lost it. Although this suggests that Utterson will be suspected of the crime, the scene ends and the subject is never brought up again.

Alone in his rented room, Hyde flees when the double-exposed figure of his victim points an accusing finger. Some passing policemen chase him to Jekyll’s house, but only the upstanding Jekyll greets them at the door.


Hoping to relieve his guilt by confessing to Bernice, Jekyll asks her to visit him. Just before she arrives, he—for the first time—involuntarily changes into Hyde. Each of the previous transformations occurred off-screen, usually during a cutaway to some other location. This time, we see more than usual, in a series of consecutive shots which show the actor in different stages of make-up and posture.

When Bernice arrives, Hyde attacks her. A servant struggles with him while Bernice calls the police. After the servant is knocked out, there is some perfunctory intercutting between Hyde chasing her around the room and the police car on its way. When the police arrive and capture Hyde, Bernice is on the floor; it’s not clear, but she appears to be dead.

Locked in a cell, Hyde changes back to Jekyll and the police are confused by the substitution. During intense questioning (“The Third Degree”), they see him change to Hyde—and so do we, in a series of shots intercut with the other men’s faces. As Hyde is strapped into an electric chair, the shot dissolves to one of Jekyll asleep in an easy chair. Bernice and Carew awaken him. Relieved that the story was only a dream, Jekyll declares, “I believe in God—I have a soul—and I still have you.”

Although fairly ingenious in the fresh way it incorporates Lanyon, Carew, and a heroine into the plot, this adaptation fails to grab the viewer's attention on any level. Events are handled clumsily and the characters barely have one dimension. Only twice does the director give Hyde a bit of business that sticks in the memory: one time, Hyde throws a bottle at Jekyll's pet cat (an animal that is not seen before or after) and later, he holds a skull and playfully pokes a finger into its eyes, then kisses its cheekbone. The titles make several references to religious belief and souls, but these are less a coherent theme than a probable attempt to stave off criticism by moralists.

The performance by Sheldon Lewis in the central role differs little from that of James Cruze in the 1912 version. Both men are nondescript actors, with no distinctiveness in looks or personality, so their Jekylls lack interest. As Hyde, each uses a minimum of make-up, relying mainly on a scraggly black wig and protruding false teeth. Each adopts a bent-kneed, stooped-over stance, but Lewis does more finger-twitching than Cruze.⁴ In *THE AFI CATALOG—FEATURE FILMS, 1911-1920*, the entry for the Lewis film mentions that, according to an unidentified news item, scenarist-director Charles J. Hayden based his version on the way the roles had been performed by Richard Mansfield. If that is true, one assumes that Mansfield's atmospheric lighting, his own powerful charisma, and the intensity that comes from a live performance made a great deal of difference.

lso in 1920, Paramount-Artcraft released its own, more ambitious version of **DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE**. Although it too has serious flaws, the overall effect is quite satisfying. The production was prepared with obvious care. The period settings are atmospheric, especially the exteriors of upper class and slum streets. The photography by Roy Overbaugh contributes to the moody, lamplit quality with shadows cast on walls and faces molded with light and shadow.⁵ The shots and compositions of director John S. Robertson are competent, without being especially imaginative; at least he keeps the viewer fairly close to the characters.

What really makes this film stand out is the presence of John Barrymore as Jekyll/Hyde. Unlike James Cruze and Sheldon Lewis, Barrymore has the huge advantage of vivid personal charisma and classic good looks, but he does not just take this for granted. He uses his good looks as Jekyll, and dramatically contrasts them with his appearance as Hyde. His performance is well thought-out, and executed with great technical skill—within the range of what the direction and scenario allow.

John Barrymore on Video

DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE

1920, Kino International, \$29.95, 78m 55s* (20 fps)

Republic Pictures Home Video, \$19.95, 65m 45s*

(22.5 fps)

Goodtimes Home Video, \$9.95, 61m 20s* (24 fps)

The John Barrymore version of the film is available from countless public domain video companies, of which these are the best and most easily found.

The Republic and Goodtimes versions contain the same footage, except Republic omits one intertitle (about 10s). Kino offers the following additional footage: the introduction of the Carews (2m 30s); a second scene at Jekyll's clinic (1m 35s); and an extended poisoning scene (1m 10s).

At the two faster projection speeds, many movements seem silly and some of Barrymore's contortions during the transformations look more absurd than they should. Also, many shots become too brief for a viewer to comfortably absorb their content. Therefore, Kino's version offers the most accurate and sympathetic presentation of the film. A few of the less extreme gestures and facial expressions do gain slightly in emphasis from the faster projection rates, but this does not counterbalance all that is misrepresented.

Both Republic and Kino offer tinted prints, but Kino's choices are generally more satisfying. For example, in the morning scene of Hyde trampling the child, Kino employs a reasonably pleasant amber, whereas Republic's tint is a bilious green.

Of the three prints used, all contain various blobs and blotches, which are perhaps most obvious in Republic's and least obvious in Kino's. A small hair is visible at the top of the frame for several minutes near the beginning of Kino's tape. In Republic's print, the framing is overgenerous, making splice marks (white lines at the top and bottom of the frame) evident on nearly every cut; this results in a distracting "blinking" effect. Regarding contrast ratios, Kino offers the greatest amount of facial detail while Goodtimes offers the least.

All three tapes contain organ scores. Kino's (by Gaylord Carter) and Goodtimes' (uncredited) are

Continued next page...

* Because the Goodtimes version replaces the original main titles with its own, times are calculated after the titles end.

...Barrymore

acceptable. Republic's (by Lee Erwin) is little more than a series of meandering chords.

The Kino International tape offers a useful sampling of supplementary materials, including the entire 1912 Thanhouser version of **DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE** (10m 10s) starring James Cruze, and two excerpts from the 1920 Pioneer Film Corporation feature version (4m 54s), starring Sheldon Lewis. The former is tinted; the latter is not. Both selections are windowboxed, have a piano score, and are properly projected at 20 fps. Last year, Image Entertainment announced a forthcoming laserdisc release of the Kino Barrymore—with the addition of the film's original screenplay to the CAV supplement—but it has since been cancelled.

The Kino version begins with two scenes omitted from the Republic and Goodtimes videos, which introduce Jekyll and Lanyon in Jekyll's laboratory, then show Jekyll at work in his clinic for the poor. The next title introduces Sir George Carew as "always as far from misery and suffering as he could get." In the scene which follows, Sir George sits in his drawing room reading a gossip column. His daughter, Millicent, enters carrying flowers sent by Jekyll; she is introduced, by a title card, as "brought up in sheltered innocence." Utterson is announced (with an introductory title card) and enters. As Utterson sits with Millicent, Sir George hides his newspaper in a drawer. Millicent asks Utterson about Jekyll and praises him for his work with the poor.

This cues a transition of Jekyll still at work in the clinic. He carries a young boy to the surgery room. The boy nervously watches a nurse handling surgical instruments, as Jekyll writes a note of apology to Sir George and sends it off by messenger. Seeing the boy's discomfort, Jekyll gives him a candy, then starts to unwrap a bandage on his arm. At this point, the scene shifts back to the Carews' drawing room. Dinner guests have arrived and Sir George is busy flattering Lady Camden.

The Republic and Goodtimes prints omit these two substantial scenes, with the title introducing Sir George followed immediately by his flattering of Lady Camden. To make up for the lost introductory title for Millicent, Goodtimes includes a new one—in a different and very ordinary typescript—after a medium shot of her. Also, the shot of Jekyll

Continued on Page 54...

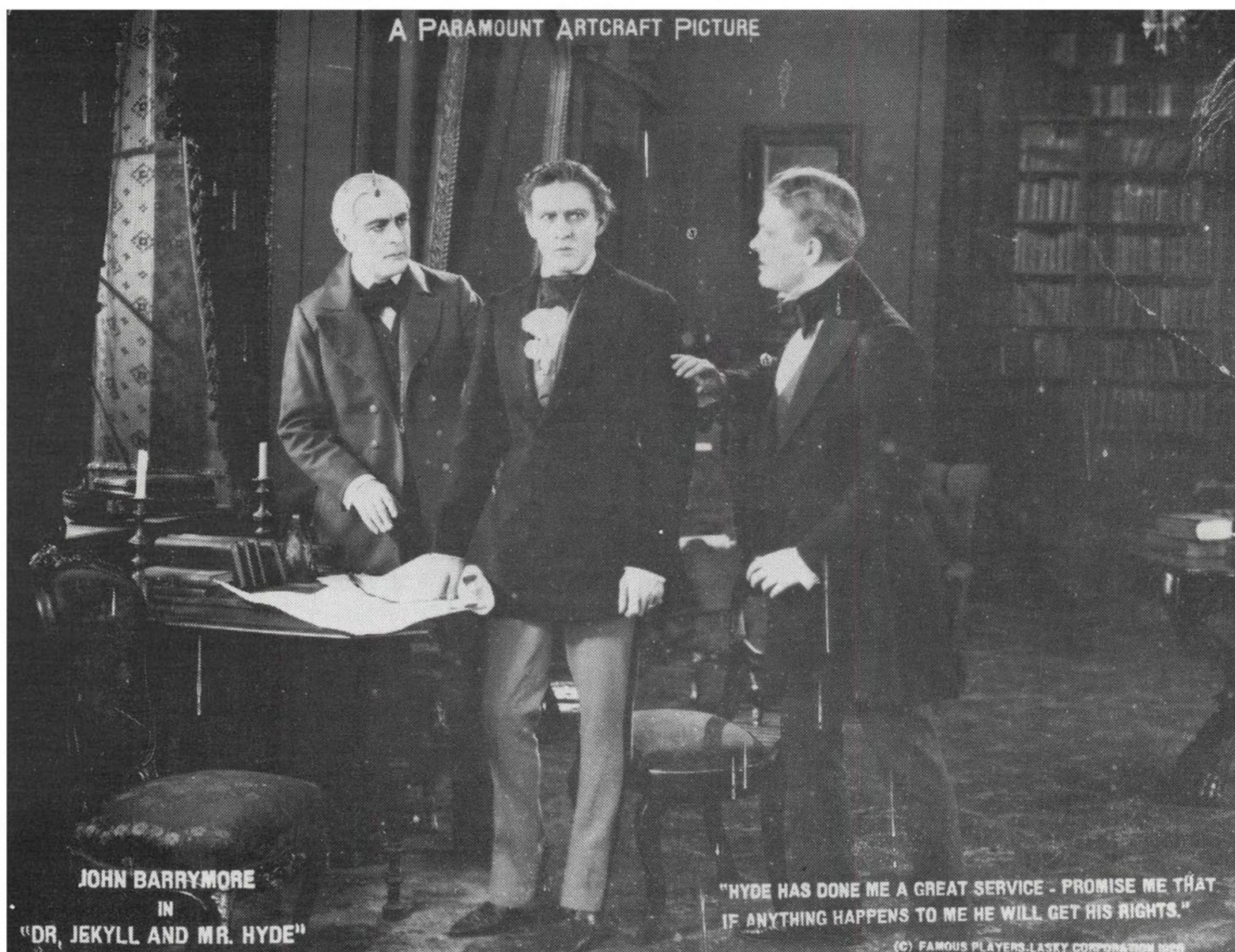
Standing or sitting with his back and neck straight, Barrymore's Jekyll has a reserved formality of manner. This performance is very controlled, yet one can usually see the character's mind at work in his face, in his eyes. As Hyde, Barrymore—like Cruze and Lewis—adopts a hunched-over posture and a shuffling gait, yet the difference in impact is the difference between talent and adequacy. Almost anyone could copy the stance and movements of Cruze and Lewis; hardly anyone could imitate those of Barrymore.

He makes little use of make-up—mainly stringy hair, a bulbous skullcap and spidery finger extensions—and does the rest through pantomime.⁶ His chin tilts upward and his head juts beyond shoulders that curve forward from the torso. The forehead is clenched and the mouth tightened. The gestures of his contorted limbs have precision and grace; his long, bony fingers touch other characters with repulsive delicacy. Behind each sly glance and leering gaze lies an intelligent, mocking wit. This embodiment of Hyde contrasts startlingly with the placid dignity of Jekyll's face and form. For the first time on film, Hyde is a full-fledged person, not a caricature.

The transformations are equally well-planned, with the first two quite different from the later three. During the initial change, the drug has an immediate and violent impact on Jekyll's body, as shown by Barrymore's agonized writhing. Shortly after, when he changes back to Jekyll, Barrymore tops this *tour de force*; his body convulses, then he leaps into the air and crashes to the floor. Admittedly, this is not understated acting, and it can easily look absurd, but it is a quite impressive presentation of acute pain and traumatic loss of physical control—especially when seen at a properly slow projection speed.

These first transformations emphasize the process of the change and the difficulty of that process. Afterward, no changes are shown for some time. Eventually, we see Jekyll change into Hyde in front of Sir George Carew (Brandon Hurst) and, later, while lying in his bed; after he dies, Hyde changes back to Jekyll. In each of these cases, the approach is quite simple: Jekyll is in a stationary position and a brief dissolve produces the change. Here, the fact that the change occurs is not the dramatic point; the implication of the change matters more, so the film does not distract us by stressing the process. This simpler approach is also appropriate because, according to the story, it becomes progressively easier for the changes to occur.

Like its title character, this version of **DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE** has a divided nature. To a considerable extent, it is faithful to Stevenson's plot. Nearly every event mentioned in the book is somehow included in Clara S. Beranger's scenario. Some of



Jekyll (John Barrymore) drafts a new will in Hyde's favor, against the counsel of witnesses Lanyon (Charles Lane) and Utterson (J. Malcolm Dunn).

these have considerable impact, such as Jekyll's waking up as Hyde and the murderous beating of Carew with a walking stick.

At times, though, this faithfulness results in unnecessary characters, or in actions which distract from the natural flow of the plot. Richard Enfield becomes Edward Endfield (Cecil Clovelly), a man-about-town who receives a major introduction but serves no useful function and soon disappears. (It doesn't help that Clovelly is so oddly made-up that he looks like a youth disguised as a much older man.) Also unnecessary is having Hyde cross to the house to find a mirror; in the book, the first transformation is recounted by Jekyll, so his need for a mirror is understandable—the reader cannot detect Hyde's appearance until Hyde sees himself—but in the film the viewer immediately sees the character's new visage, so the prolonged business about the mirror just delays matters.

While it is faithful in these specific but sometimes minor details, the scenario also deviates from the original in a number of basic ways. Like Mansfield and Russell, Beranger starts reasonably enough by

following Jekyll's actions instead of Utterson's; unlike the play, and like the 1912 and 1913 films, she begins by introducing Jekyll before he first turns into Hyde, which eliminates the mystery element (in which the facts are only revealed when Lanyon discovers them) while encouraging the viewer to identify with Jekyll/Hyde more than with the other characters. Beranger also borrows from Mansfield and Russell the idea of developing Carew and giving him a daughter, now called Millicent (Martha Mansfield), as Jekyll's romantic interest.

A more profound change involves the conception of Jekyll. Evidently afraid to present a flawed, complex main character, Beranger simplifies Jekyll into a pure and noble person, the exact opposite of Hyde—and of what Stevenson created. To accomplish this, she turned to Oscar Wilde's novel, *THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY* (published in 1891, five years after Stevenson's book). In Wilde's story, the beautiful and innocent Dorian is awakened to sensuality by the cynical Lord Henry Wotton; as his self-indulgence increases, Dorian retains his original appearance but a portrait of him reveals his inner corruption.

...Barrymore

unwrapping the boy's bandage is inserted, after the note from Jekyll arrives, in a spot that suggests Millicent is thinking about Jekyll at work. The Republic print contains this shot of Jekyll and the boy, but does not provide the new title card for Millicent, leaving her unIntroduced.

These modifications have been made with enough ingenuity to disguise the omissions, but the missing material develops the characters and relationships more fully and establishes Jekyll's writing of the note. Kino must be praised for restoring the two scenes, but whoever prepared the print failed to remove the pieces that have been added to cover up the gap! Thus, Millicent receives two introductions and the shot of Jekyll and the boy is awkwardly repeated. (A 16mm print of the film rented in 1984 from EmGee Film Library managed to include the two scenes and leave out the redundancies.)

Also restored by Kino is the full Renaissance-era sequence illustrating Gina's story about her ring with the poison compartment. The Republic and Goodtimes versions include only part of the final shot, as the victim of poison keels over, whereas Kino provides a total of fifteen shots that establish the victim as a romantic rival of the poisoner and show the ring in use.

Unfortunately, Kino's restoration remains incomplete (as a comparison with the EmGee print reveals). When Jekyll has Lanyon and Utterson sign his new will, in which he leaves everything to Hyde, there is—in all three video versions—a clumsy jump from Lanyon and Utterson standing and exchanging looks, to just Utterson seated next to Jekyll as he tells him that Millicent is hurt by his neglect of her. Missing from this sequence are nine shots, and part of two others, including a title that stresses the contents of the will. The missing footage shows Jekyll asking Utterson to promise that if anything happens to him, Hyde will get his rights. Lanyon and Utterson then walk to the door, but Utterson pauses and returns to talk to Jekyll about Millicent.

Later, after the scene in which Sir George sees Hyde trample the child, we see Millicent seated in profile, sad at Jekyll's absence. In another abrupt jump in continuity, this is followed by a long shot of her standing in the hallway, holding a letter; she immediately runs up the stairs. In the background, Sir George can be seen by the door, but it is unclear whether he is arriving or departing.

Beranger's scenario loosely adapts this situation, with the equally beautiful Barrymore playing Jekyll/Dorian, while Hyde is comparable to the portrait and Sir George Carew is the cynic who introduces Jekyll to the world of the music hall and his own urges. The author even gives Sir George one of Lord Henry's statements to Dorian: "The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it." She also steals Dorian's visit to an opium den, complete with the man who "thinks he's got red ants on him." Less blatantly, she takes Sybil Vane, the actress in a low-class theater who attracts Dorian and ruins his life, and turns her into Gina (Nita Naldi), a music hall dancer whose interaction with Jekyll/Hyde is somewhat similar.

The earthy Gina provides a useful contrast to the pure Millicent Carew, and her presence helps the film to establish Hyde's decadence, as does the opium den scene. These two additions partially fill in what Stevenson left vague about Hyde's activities. Most likely inspired by the 1913 film, Beranger (like the author of Pioneer's rival 1920 feature) also develops Stevenson's brief references to Jekyll's good works by showing him at a clinic for the poor, which he runs at his own expense.

Although Beranger turns Jekyll into a bland, uninteresting character, her Sir George becomes quite an intriguing one. It is hard to be certain how we're expected to react to Sir George: Is he a hypocrite or a realist? Even Dr. Lanyon's criticism of him turns into a kind of praise: "There isn't much in life Sir George has overlooked... The one decent thing about him is the way he has brought up Millicent. He has protected her as only a man of the world could." Certainly, Lanyon is perfectly willing to socialize with the indecent Sir George. (In a way, Sir George is the "normal" version of Jekyll that Stevenson described.)

Sir George is skeptical of Jekyll's wholesomeness, yet he also refers to Hyde as "vile." By reacting against both of these extremes, he seems to function as a balanced, socially acceptable composite of the two sides of human nature. One is tempted to side with him in this talk with Jekyll:

SIR GEORGE: In devoting yourself to others, Jekyll, aren't you neglecting the development of your own life?

JEKYLL: Isn't it by serving others that one develops oneself, Sir George?

SIR GEORGE: Which self? A man has two—as he has two hands. Because I use my right hand, should I never use my left? Your really strong man fears nothing. It is the weak one who is afraid of—experience. A man cannot destroy the savage in him by denying its impulses. The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it. With your youth, you should live—as I have *lived*. I have my memories. What will you have at my age?

The implication seems to be that *both* extremes—Jekyll's goodness and Hyde's evil—are unnatural. Because Sir George's "memories" remain unspecified, we are free to assume that they weren't so very bad (and besides, they occurred in his youth). This fairly favorable impression of Sir George is undermined by the film's introduction of him as "always as far from misery and suffering as he could get," and so, although his ambiguity is one of the film's virtues, it might not have been completely intentional. (The parallel between Sir George and Jekyll/Hyde is carried through, in that Millicent never learns about *either* man's double life.)

Beranger's scenario is interesting in the characters and relationships it outlines, but it rarely embodies them in vivid action or interaction, and director John S. Robertson does not transcend this limitation in his staging. As a result, the dramatic impact and even the story point of many scenes are not clearly established. Often, characters are shown reacting to events *after* they've occurred, or anticipating future events; the result is a cumulative feeling of passivity and slowness rather than progressive action. (The slower, more appropriate projection speed of the Kino International release makes this weakness especially evident.) Perhaps in an attempt to rectify this problem after the scenes were shot, the film contains many intertitles that supply emphases, plot information, and character insights that were not dramatized within the scenes themselves.

The opening scene is typically passive and undramatic. Jekyll and Lanyon (Charles Lane) are seated at opposite sides of the laboratory. Jekyll looks at something through his microscope. The two men talk. Then Jekyll has Lanyon look through the microscope. Throughout, the characters do almost nothing and say too much, necessitating intertitles that further slow the pace. It is not even clear what Jekyll is looking at and why, although that information would help define his character because he presumably drops this project to pursue the separation of man's natures. Here, the specimen functions only as a weak excuse to introduce the two men.

The scenes in Jekyll's clinic contain a bit more detail, such as a young boy's nervousness, but both Jekyll and his patients still do a lot of sitting and standing in place. The after-dinner conversation in which Sir George offers his philosophy to Jekyll is even more passive than the opening scene. All of the characters are seated, with talk the only activity—a situation more appropriate to a sound film than a silent one, as it requires the frequent alternation of shots of people with dialogue titles. Kino's slower speed accurately reveals this scene's static quality, while it also helps by lingering on the shots of Jekyll,

...Barrymore

Here, a substantial and significant scene has been abbreviated to two meaningless images.

A total of thirteen shots (and part of each one that remains) have been omitted from the sequence. In the complete first shot, Millicent daubs her eyes and pulls herself together. A servant enters with a letter from Jekyll in which he declares his love, adding that to "live without you would be a living death." Happy at what is essentially a proposal of marriage, Millicent goes to the hallway and shows it to her father. He says that she need not bother writing back, as he is going out and will stop at Jekyll's and tell him she wants to see him. The missing footage justifies Sir George's otherwise unexpected arrival at Jekyll's house in the next scene and explains why he mentions the marriage. His demand that Jekyll explain his association with Hyde prompts the confrontation which leads to Hyde revealing himself and killing Sir George. The missing footage is all that establishes the possibility of a marriage between Jekyll and Millicent. The awkward cuts that result from the loss of these two sections are identical on all three tapes.

It is possible that the film has been re-edited in other ways sometime during its history. In two spots, characters clearly speak but no dialogue titles are provided, even though they might be expected under the circumstances. When Jekyll and Lanyon leave the Music Hall, after the first encounter with Gina, they pause and exchange some unknown dialogue before getting into a carriage. Shortly after, Jekyll's comments about separating the two natures of man anger Lanyon; just before walking out, Lanyon makes a statement that is also not provided.

In the bar area of the opium den, Hyde notices a man brushing violently at this body. "He thinks he's covered with red ants," explains the barmaid. This dialogue title appears misplaced: it awkwardly interrupts a shot of the man, instead of being linked with the character who says it.

When Hyde tramples the child, the editing is abrupt, as if shots had been shortened or removed. This may, however, be due to the director's attempt to be discreet by not showing the actual moment of impact.

Because the Kino tape includes more footage than the other two, it is clearly preferable, but by no means complete or definitive.

—Paul M. Jensen



Hyde conspires with the corrupt music hall proprietor (Louis Wolheim).

so that we more readily see Sir George's ideas start to sink in.

The next thing we know, Sir George has brought Jekyll to the Music Hall. It would have been interesting to see Sir George convince Jekyll to come along: the argument(s) he uses and Jekyll's manner as he first resists, then agrees. But to show that would be to show a subtle transition in a character, something the film often declines to do.

The film perks up as Gina,⁷ an Italian dancer, performs in her low-cut costume—a sight that conveys more of its intended sensuousness at Kino's slower projection speed. Sir George has her join the group, and as she snuggles up to the rigid Jekyll, Sir George smirks confidently. When Jekyll walks out, Lanyon and Endfield follow. In a nice touch, Sir George stays behind; he offers Gina a glass of wine and she takes it, with a touch of weariness that implies much about her life—and his. This bit of characterization might easily go unnoticed at a faster projection speed.

Jekyll and Lanyon talk briefly in the street, then enter a carriage. The title that follows states authoritatively, "For the first time in his life, Jekyll had wakened to a sense of his baser nature." However, this had not been evident in the staging or acting of the previous scenes, nor is it shown in the shots that

immediately follow. The title should cut directly to an image of Jekyll struggling with this realization, but all we get is a long shot of the carriage arriving at Jekyll's home. The two men enter, and during the first part of their conversation Jekyll still seems his old, righteous self. Then, too suddenly, Jekyll shifts his position: "Wouldn't it be marvelous if the two natures in man could be separated... To yield to every evil impulse—yet leave the soul untouched!" This, finally, seems to be the moment when Jekyll recognizes his own "baser nature," but nothing in the staging, acting, or writing reveals his thought process—it is all internal, and therefore abrupt and inexplicable. Lanyon declares Jekyll's idea "sacrilege" and leaves in anger.

The days and nights Jekyll spends working in his lab are weakly summarized by a title, and we next see Jekyll as he stands ready to drink the potion. As Jekyll hesitates, the director—in a creative and revealing moment—double exposes a close-up of Sir George's face. Clearly, it is Sir George and his general approach to life that attracts Jekyll, not the more specific and limited lure of Gina. Jekyll drinks and we see his transformation. He crosses the courtyard to the house, where he examines his face in a mirror. Wondering (as a title tells us) if he can change back, he returns to the

lab and again we see the transformation. He returns to the mirror and, after making sure the potion worked, tells his servant Poole (George Stevens) about Hyde and asks that a full-length mirror be placed in the lab.

In the next scene, instead of heading straight for Gina, Hyde more pragmatically plans for his double life by renting a room in Soho. Then "Hyde set forth upon a sea of license—to do what he, as Jekyll, could not do." At the Music Hall, he arranges for Gina to visit his booth. She cringes at the sight of him, but sits down. One anticipates a dramatic scene of seduction and intimidation, but here the scenario shifts in an odd way. He asks about the large ring she wears; she shows its secret compartment, which was designed to hold poison. The history of the ring is then illustrated, in a kind of flashback to what appears to be Renaissance Italy. Hyde, obviously interested, takes the ring from her and the scene ends.

This incident shifts the scene's emphasis from sex to death, and therefore disappoints the viewer's expectations. It might have been a potent indication of Hyde's real interests, except that one never learns why he takes the ring. Does he fear she might use it on him? Does he anticipate using it himself? The scene gives no clue, and the ring is never referred to again until the film's climax.

This scene with Gina is followed by the film's most cryptic moment: a single shot of a smirking, costumed juggler, who eases around a corner, out of sight. This figure, who appears nowhere else in the film, could be an allegorical embodiment of Fate's amusement at mankind's folly. It's hard to tell, and one wonders what the filmmakers had in mind.

A brief scene follows in which Utterson (J. Malcolm Dunn) proposes to Millicent. She turns him down, for she loves another. Nowhere else is Utterson's interest in Millicent relevant to the plot, but because we assume the other man is Jekyll, the scene at least develops her fondness for him. Later, Jekyll prepares a new will, which leaves everything to Hyde. After Lanyon and Utterson sign it, Lanyon tells Jekyll that Millicent is hurt by his neglect of her.

"As Hyde plunged deeper into vice, his trail was soon strewn with victims of his depravity," announces a title, thereby disguising the fact that this deep plunge isn't shown, nor is the depravity. We now see Gina in Hyde's room; Hyde enters and orders her to leave. She does so, and he pauses for a second, then shrugs. The film has omitted every aspect of their relationship, showing only the very beginning and the very end. This makes it hard for us to perceive her as his "victim," and him as a "victimizer," especially because her manner is ambiguous—she seems drained of vitality, or perhaps merely depressed. It is

possible that the scene as it stands was once part of a longer one, for when we join it, Gina is already packing her bag, as if anticipating that Hyde will soon arrive and evict her. As it is, Gina perfectly illustrates the film's discreet avoidance of dramatic moments, which turns the characters into passive figures reacting to the undramatized.

After a title about Jekyll's "revulsion" at Hyde's actions, we see him listening as Millicent plays the piano. He acts distraught, then kisses her. Again the initial title tries to build up the impact of a less-than-powerful scene. The next title also summarizes events that should have been shown, while emphasizing what the subsequent images fail to convey: "For some time Dr. Jekyll renounced the dark indulgences of Hyde—until in an hour of weakness the demon, long caged burst forth more malignant than before." This is followed by a weak extreme long shot of a street, with Hyde a tiny figure moving along it. Ideally, we would have seen this moment of bursting forth, or at least a shot that conveys Hyde's sense of triumph. Instead, another chance for viewer involvement is missed. It also is not clear whether or not this change to Hyde was voluntary; the words "burst forth" suggest that it might not have been so, but the comparable occasion in the book is.

Hyde heads for a bar which fronts an opium den. Once more we expect dramatic events but receive a scene that is frustratingly passive and unclear. He is greeted as a frequent customer by an aged barmaid. He notices a man who thinks he is covered with red ants. He caresses one woman; when another steps to the bar, she turns out to be Gina. He brings the two women to a mirror, as if to make them look at themselves, then walks away. In other words, he does very little and what he does do is vague in its intention. Hyde then enters the opium den. He stares at some glazed-over customers. Does he feel superior? Is he curious? Does he want their bunks? It's difficult to say. An employee brings in still another woman for him to look at, and the scene ends without ever getting anywhere, though it had obvious potential.

At the Carew dinner table, Millicent is distressed at being ignored by Jekyll. Sir George comforts her. Later, he goes to Jekyll's house to ask why, but Poole hasn't seen him, either. As Sir George leaves, Hyde tramples a boy playing in the street. At Sir George's insistence, Hyde agrees to pay off the child's father. Hyde enters the laboratory and emerges with a check signed by Jekyll. Sir George is bewildered.

Millicent receives a letter from Jekyll declaring his love and proposing marriage. (This comes as a surprise to the viewer, because the previous scenes have presented only Hyde.) Sir George agrees to tell Jekyll that she wants to see him.



In a fit of anger, Jekyll involuntarily becomes Hyde to strangle his mentor, Sir George Carew (Brandon Hurst).

According to a title, Jekyll “realized that the evil nature to which he had voluntarily yielded now threatened to dominate his whole life.” This is blandly visualized in a long shot of Jekyll seated, looking morose. Sir George arrives to confront Jekyll: “What can you, with your presumably clean life, have to do with a vile thing like that Hyde?... Unless you can explain, I shall have to object to your marriage with my daughter.” Jekyll’s response drives home the impact of Sir George’s philosophical meddling: “What right have you to question me—you, who first tempted me?... It was you—you with your cynicism—who made me ashamed of my goodness, who made me long for a knowledge of evil!” At this point Hyde emerges, without the help of a potion, and savagely beats Sir George to death with a walking stick.

By having Sir George confront, and be destroyed by, a variation on his own double life—his philosophy carried to the extreme, as it were—the film offers a powerful encounter, one that is only somewhat weakened by the question of what *Hyde* has against Sir George. Wouldn’t Hyde, in actuality, be grateful to the other man for causing him to exist? It is Jekyll who resents Sir George’s effect on him, so Jekyll should kill him. But the good Dr. Jekyll can’t allow himself to

do that, so his Hyde side carries out this unacceptable impulse. Once he appears, though, why would Hyde do so? Is he angry because Sir George called him “vile”? Does he kill Sir George because he has seen the transformation? Neither of these questions is answered by the scene.

Hyde flees to his room, where he places some papers and his stick in the fireplace. Utterson gives the police Hyde’s address, but when they arrive he is gone. They retrieve the partially burned stick. Lanyon tells Millicent of her father’s death and brings her to the scene. Hyde sneaks into the laboratory and mixes the potion. As Jekyll, he emerges and comforts Millicent.

This climactic flurry of action is interrupted by a vivid but isolated scene. “And now, in his hours off guard, outraged Nature took her hideous revenge—and out of the black abyss of torment sent upon him the creeping horror that was his other self.” For a change, this intense title is matched by the images that follow. As Jekyll lies in his bed, a giant spider (with Hyde’s own head!) appears and merges with him, leaving the figure of Hyde in the bed. This metaphorical waking-nightmare sums up Jekyll’s helplessness in Hyde’s grip, while embodying the horror of the event.

The power of this scene makes its positioning so late in the story appropriate, but does it really belong here? The earlier title about Hyde bursting forth suggested that Jekyll first involuntarily changed to Hyde *then*, but the images did not fit what should be seen as a momentous event. The later change in front of Sir George is the first time we know for certain that Hyde appears without the potion's aid, but then the involuntary aspect is lost amid the scene's other elements. Because the spider scene exists only to dramatize Hyde's control over Jekyll, it would logically represent the *first* time this happens; therefore, it should have *preceded* the scene with Sir George. At any rate, the spider scene contains nothing that requires its placement in its present spot.

In a summary scene, Millicent expresses her worry about Jekyll to Lanyon, who reveals that Jekyll won't see anyone and that Hyde has disappeared.

A title announces that because the drug has been used up, Jekyll dare not leave his laboratory. Poole reports that no more of the drug can be found in London. In what is probably Barrymore's most excessive bit of physical acting, Jekyll prays. Millicent arrives. As Jekyll is about to open the door to her, he notices his hand change to Hyde's. He tells her to leave. Then, as he feels Hyde emerging, he opens the ring he took from Gina and swallows the poison inside. (This seems to be the only reason for introducing the ring in the first place.) The door opens and Millicent enters. Hyde sneaks up behind her and, as he embraces her, collapses. She runs out and Lanyon enters in time to see the dead Hyde change back to Jekyll. He keeps the revelation to himself, telling the others that Hyde had killed Jekyll (whereas, in fact, Jekyll had killed Hyde). The film ends with everyone but Lanyon believing that Hyde has escaped.

••••• NEXT ISSUE •••••

HYDE SPEAKS!

Rouben Mamoulian's 1931 version and its transformation from film to video!

NOTES

¹ Often listed as a 1932 release, Mamoulian's **DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE**—according to Ronald V. Borst's *GRAVEN IMAGES* (Grove Press)—actually premiered on December 31, 1931. —Ed.

² Edgar Norton also portrayed Poole in the 1931 film version.

³ Three British theatrical adaptations of **DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE** were produced in London prior to

the 1932 film, but they had minor impact and little is known about them. A four-act play by Daniel Bandmann was performed in August, 1888, at the Opera Comique; this may have been more of a burlesque than a straight adaptation. In 1910, Henry Brodribb Irving (the eldest son of the legendary Sir Henry Irving) starred in a version by Joseph William Comyns Carr, which included a Laura Jekyll (played by Irving's wife) and a Lady Carew among its numerous new characters. 1927 offered two contrasting productions. In April, a new adaptation by Lena Ashwell and Roger Pocock updated the story "with topical references and... facetious cleverness" (*NEW YORK TIMES*, 4/24/27, VII, page 2). This was followed in November by a brief revival of the Comyns Carr version, produced by the London Repertory Company.

⁴ The introduction to Blackhawk's print of the 1912 Thanhouser film mentions Cruze's dual performance, but British film historian Denis Gifford has claimed that Cruze only played Jekyll. "In 1963," he explains, without getting any more specific, "the octogenarian actor Harry Benham revealed that he, and not James Cruze, had played Mr. Hyde!" (*A PICTORIAL HISTORY OF HORROR MOVIES*, Hamlyn, 1973) Although this may be true, it cannot be accepted as fact without additional confirmation.

⁵ *THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF HORROR MOVIES* and *THE FILM ENCYCLOPEDIA—SCIENCE FICTION* (both edited by Phil Hardy) credit the photography to Karl Struss and Roy Overbaugh, and then ignore Overbaugh by commenting on the "excellent camerawork from Struss," stating that the "true star of the movie is the cinematographer, Struss." In an account of his own career (*HOLLYWOOD CAMERAMEN*, Indiana University Press, 1970), Struss does not mention working on this film, though he was responsible for the innovative photography of Rouben Mamoulian's 1931 version. According to Ephraim Katz' *THE FILM ENCYCLOPEDIA*, Struss worked for Cecil B. DeMille for three years starting in 1919.

⁶ It is one of the oldest of Old Wives' Tales that Barrymore accomplished his transformation without the use of makeup or dissolves. —Ed.

⁷ Contemporary reviews list Nita Naldi's character as "Therese," not "Gina." Evidently the studio changed her name sometime between the preparation of the pressbook and the filming of the intertitles.



LASERDISCS

By Tim Lucas



A classic publicity pose from ABBOTT & COSTELLO MEET THE KILLER, BORIS KARLOFF.

ABBOTT & COSTELLO MEET THE KILLER, BORIS KARLOFF

1949, MCA Universal #40661,
(1/CLV, 2/CAV), D, \$34.98, 84m

If anyone could stop enjoying **ABBOTT & COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN** (1948) long enough to count its shortcomings, the only conceivable missing element would be Boris Karloff. (According to Gregory Mank's *KARLOFF AND LUGOSI*, Universal was painfully aware of this, and paid Karloff's New York City hotel bill in exchange for some "candid" publicity shots outside the theater where the film premiered.) This, the second and least imaginative of Bud and Lou's popular "encounter" comedies, is additional proof of that missed opportunity. Here Karloff is cast as Swami Talpur, a turbanned mystic of sinister intent, but he is surrounded with so many other villainous types that the King is left with few opportunities to shine. Lou Costello stars as Freddie Phillips, a bumbling bellman at the Lone Caverns Resort Hotel, who finds himself framed for the murder of famed attorney Amos Strickland (Nicholas Joy), killed in the midst of writing his memoirs. As Freddie's cousin, house detective Casey Edwards (Bud Abbott) and Inspector Wellman (James Flavin) soon discover, nearly every guest at the hotel is a former client of Strickland's, with good reason to want his manuscript suppressed.

The supporting cast is well-chosen, including the likes of Lenore Aubert, Alan Mowbray, and Roland Winters, and renowned character actor Percy Helton is particularly amusing as a moon-faced hotel staffer who takes a shine to Lou (who's in drag as a hotel maid, for reasons too complicated to explain). Alas,

this stellar Universal cast is at the mercy of a Monogram-type script with even fewer laughs than **THE APE MAN** (1941). Karloff has only one outstanding scene, as he attempts to incriminate a hypnotized Lou by compelling him to an act of self-destruction ("You're going to commit suicide if it's the last thing you do!" he sneers), but his role is ultimately so ephemeral that he is denied any semblance of a salutary farewell, instead literally disappearing into the backwash of suspects. The production values, however, are top-notch, particularly the sumptuous photography of Charles Van Enger, Milton Schwarzwald's teasing score, and the costumes of Rosemary Odell. Karloff may have been sold short by the scenario, but he looks grand in his silk blouses, pleated trousers, and two-tone Oxfords.

This "Encore Edition" disc divides the film into 18 chapters and perpetuates MCA Universal's quirky liking for the unnumbered chapter; Chapter 1 not only occurs *after* the delightfully animated main title sequence, it doesn't begin until Costello's first appearance—3m into the picture! Side 2 is in CAV, allowing for frame-by-frame examination of the film's best sequence: Costello's harrowing descent into the bottomless pit of the Lone Caverns, a thrilling array of stuntwork, animation, and special optical effects by trick cinematographer David S. Horsley (who, we must remember, turned Bela Lugosi into a bat in **A&C MEET FRANKENSTEIN**—*not* John P. Fulton). The print quality is reasonably good, though susceptible to scratches and speckles at the starts and ends of reels. The end credits are slightly windowboxed. Unlike most other MCA "Encore" editions, the disc offers no supplementary trailer or stills.

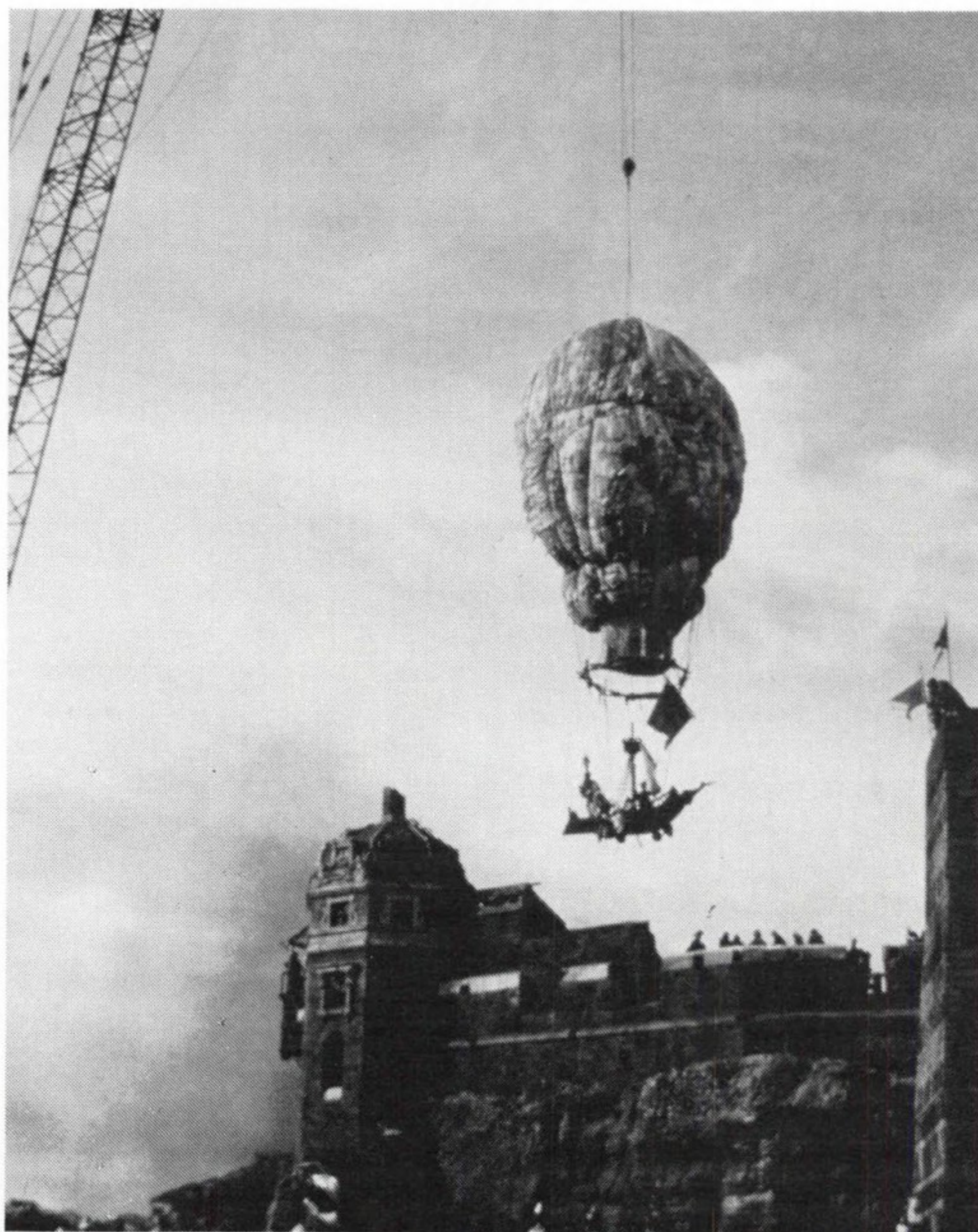
• THE ADVENTURES OF BARON MUNCHAUSEN

1989, Voyager/Criterion
#CC1281L, LB/D/S/SS/MA,
\$99.98, 126m

• MONTY PYTHON AND THE HOLY GRAIL

1975, Voyager/Criterion
#CC1311L, D/MA, \$49.98, 92m

The Voyager Company continues their series of annotated Terry Gilliam discs with these two "Criterion Collection" titles, which represent his craft at its most humble and overblown. **THE ADVENTURES OF BARON MUNCHAUSEN** (the more Brobdingnagian of the two) had a catastrophic production history and failed to recoup its \$45,000,000 cost at the boxoffice, but it's the most ambitious and best-realized of Gilliam's "pure" works. John Neville—who married a mistress from outer space in the exceptional SF-sleeper **UNEARTHLY STRANGER** (1963), and played Sherlock Holmes in **A STUDY IN TERROR** (1965)—is the perfect embodiment of the Baron, an 18th Century prototype of the tall tale-teller, who upstages an unauthorized *commedia dell'arte* performance of his life story (not to mention the Turkish invasion of Constantinople) with the so-called "true" version. We subsequently follow him on cannonball rides, into the stomach of a whale on the bottom of the sea, up to the jails of the King of the Moon (Robin Williams), and into the rococo ballrooms of the Gods; every narrative twist and turn is droll, picturesque, and wholly captivating. Overwhelmingly visual but ultimately warm and humane, the film's portrayal of a single voice's victory over a ceaseless torrent of reality, illusion, and adversity forms a vital bridge between the cold intellectualism of **BRAZIL**



*Held aloft by hot air and a balloon made of women's silk undergarments (and a crane), our Hero makes his escape in Terry Gilliam's **THE ADVENTURES OF BARON MUNCHAUSEN**.*

(1985) and the emotional vulnerability of **THE FISHER KING** (1991). In simpler terms, it's a great lie beautifully told.

The film also marks Gilliam's point of maturation in the handling of actors, perhaps because it relies less than his earlier work on the presence of the fraternal order of Monty Python's Flying Circus. There are too many standout performances to count, but those worthy of special mention include Uma Thurman as Venus (emerging into stardom from an outsized clamshell), Oliver Reed as her smitten and jealous husband Vulcan, and perhaps best of all, 8 year-old Canadian actress Sarah

Polley as the Baron's feisty and resilient tag-along, Sally Salt. It's very easy for child actors to ruin a movie, even those which make little or no requirement of the imagination; this one makes some exceptional demands, and with Ms. Polley as our audience surrogate—reflecting our amazement, asking our questions, voicing our doubts—we couldn't be in better hands.

Much of **MUNCHAUSEN** was shot at Cinécittà Studios in Rome, with many of Italy's most stellar technicians contributing to its production: Giuseppe Rotunno, the great cinematographer of **ROCCO AND HIS BROTHERS** (1960), **THE LEOPARD** (1963), and **TOBY**

DAMMIT (1967); Gabrielle Pescucci, Sergio Leone's costume designer, who managed to create her best work for Gilliam, despite the fact that wardrobe for a dozen characters and hundreds of extras had to be designed and created—from scratch—in only two months; production designer Dante Ferretti, who created the exotic yet spartan look of Pasolini's "Trilogy of Life"; art director Giorgio Giovanninni, whose columnated ruins in Mario Bava's **BLACK SUNDAY** (1960) crowned him one of the chief architects of the Italian horror film; and second unit director Michele Soavi (visible in the foreground at Chapter 4, Frame 6022), whose own directorial achievements with **STAGE FRIGHT** and **THE CHURCH** require no embellishment here. Their collaboration with Gilliam is a palatial pastry for the senses.

The transfer is flawless, delivering a perfection of sound and image that make sport even of Columbia's original 35mm theatrical prints. The film is presented in its original "European" aspect ratio of 1.75:1; quite generous considering that it was projected in most American theaters with a 1.85:1 widescreen matte. The CAV pressing is a particular delight when it comes to examining a dozen or more unbelievable effects shots (the horse leap from the high tower, the decapitation of the eunuch, the landing of the giant asparagus spear, etc.), which lose none of their magic studied frame-by-frame.

During the film, Gilliam's commentary can be heard on the second analog track, and it strikes a far different chord than was heard in his accompaniment to Voyager's exemplary, widescreen edition of **THE FISHER KING** [VW 13:50-51]. In the latter case, Gilliam discussed his most recent release with pride and elation, even romance, clearly astonished that a non-original project had somehow resulted in

his best, warmest, and most personal film; in the case of **MUNCHAUSEN**, a dream project on which almost everything but the end result went wrong, Gilliam is aware of the film's historic importance but he sounds detached, his enthusiasm deflated. Also, whereas **FISHER KING** offered a directorial commentary, **MUNCHAUSEN**'s commentary serves primarily to explain how individual shots and scenes of this "special-effects film" (Gilliam's description) were done, or by which artistic precedents they were influenced, leaving the production history details to those less burned by that particular inferno.

Those details are spelled out in a bountiful supplementary section that occupies half of Side 5 and all of Side 6. Among the treasures here are, in order of their appearance, the storyboards of four unfilmed scenes; the (cropped) footage of four deleted scenes; a history of Baron Munchausen, from his historic counterpart, to the stories of Rudolf Raspe, to his subsequent celebrations in song and cinema; a witty analysis (or paraphrasing) of the original script, pre-budget cuts; a chapter from Raspe's book documenting the Baron's trip to the Moon—less a narrative than an itinerary; a list of previous film adaptations, including clips from Joseph von Baky's 1943 UFA version and Karel Zeman's 1962 version (what a pleasure to step through Zeman's work in CAV!); director and actor biographies (in a howling gaffe, Oliver Reed is captioned as posing with "Evelyn Anders" [Yvonne Monlaur] in **CURSE OF THE WEREWOLF**!); details of handbills seen in the film; Ferretti's set design blueprints and Pescucci's wardrobe sketches; a history of the production; location-scouting videos, with commentary by Gilliam, Ferretti, and Pescucci; a chapter on special effects, including

hilarious outtakes of Robin Williams' bluescreen work ("Robin was nominated for an Academy Award for **GOOD MORNING, VIETNAM** that same week, and there we were, throwing tomatoes at him," Gilliam observes); hundreds of production stills; and a depressing look at the film's post-production humiliations, including several audience preview cards from teenage girls, demanding to know "What happend (sic) to Sting?" (Gilliam gave the rock star a walk-on cameo, for no better reason than he happened to live across the street.) The US theatrical trailer and excerpts from the film's "electronic presskit" are also included. An astoundingly thorough document on a near-par with FoxVideo's recent **ALIEN** box set, this supplement takes (by my count) well over three hours to plough through.

To compare **MUNCHAUSEN** to Gilliam's first directorial outing, **MONTY PYTHON AND THE HOLY GRAIL** (co-directed by Terry Jones), is like comparing gruel to Pantagruel. The second feature film of Monty Python's Flying Circus, following **AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT** (1972), **MP&THG** is a plotless, anarchic, absurdist comedy about the search of King Arthur (Graham Chapman) for companions in his quest for the Holy Grail. Each Monty Python member essays several roles, and the poor directors are too green to shoot double exposures when two of an actor's characters must appear onscreen simultaneously, relying instead on some awkward blocking. Contrary to the liner notes of Colman Kay (who calls it "the shining moment" of filmed Python), **MP&THG** has its moments—John Cleese's French *provocateur* is sublimely silly ("Come back and I will taunt you a second time!"), as is the sequence of the shrubbery-loving Knights

Who Say "Ni!"—but, on the whole, it hasn't dated very well.

On a production level, **MP&THG** seems even cruder than its predecessor, and the commentary tracks on Voyager's disc (shared by Jones and Gilliam) draw our attention to flaws that might have otherwise eluded us, while also increasing our appreciation that certain crudely-filmed sequences are actually *successful*—in that they were, in fact, much cruder on-set than they appear onscreen. Gilliam, whose commentary was recorded as he watched the film for the first time in many years, reveals that his animated "God" was assembled from cut-outs of a famous British cricketer, and recalls meeting two adoring fans at the film's New York premiere—the as-yet-undiscovered John Belushi and Gilda Radner.

The darkish print is heavily speckled at reel ends, and has been letterboxed at 1.80. A brief (34s) excised scene at Anthrax Hall has been reinstated—which, perhaps prophetically, addresses its own status as a missing scene—and the second analog track contains all of the dialogue dubbed into Japanese. Whether this was meant to improve the disc's exportability or merely as an indulgence in Pythonian perversity, the results are fascinating. Included in the short supplementary section (along with the British theatrical trailer and some production photos) is the scene at the French castle, with the dubbed Japanese dialogue *subtitled back into English* to illustrate the gulf between Eastern and Western humor. (The insult "Your mother was a hamster and your father smelt of elderberries" becomes "I can imagine what kind of a couple your parents were!") Most curious of all is the Japanese track during the organ

exit music, which concludes with a barrage of Oriental voices, presumably audience members reacting to the movie. I wish Voyager had also subtitled *that*.

THE COMPLEAT TEX AVERY

1942-55, MGM/UA #ML102681, D/LB, \$99.98

Now that thousands of diehard animation fans have invested years of their lives haunting the various cartoon shows on WTBS and TNT, slowly compiling a series of home-made tapes that haphazardly resemble the collected works of Frederick Bean "Tex" Avery, comes this lavishly packaged, chronologically sequenced, digital answer to their prayers. If you've ever known the exquisite agony of tuning into BUGS AND FRIENDS 10m late and finding yourself gaping at the last 30s or so of "**The Early Bird Dood It**," "**Garden Gopher**," or some other elusive Avery opus, **THE COMPLEAT TEX AVERY** is probably already in your collection. In the realm of short-form animation, no other laserdisc set could possibly exceed the humor, style, and originality exhibited in this one.

MGM/UA has previously released three volumes of Avery cartoons on their videocassette compilation series, **TEX AVERY'S SCREWBALL CLASSICS**. As you may recall, "**Uncle Tom's Cabaña**," one of his funniest works, was withheld at the last minute from **VOLUME 3** [VW 6:60]—reportedly because Turner Entertainment has a corporate policy against releasing any cartoons that feature racial stereotypes—and replaced by the innocuous "**The Flea Circus**." Rest assured: "**Uncle Tom's Cabaña**" is included here, as are numerous cartoons containing not only racial and sexual caricatures,

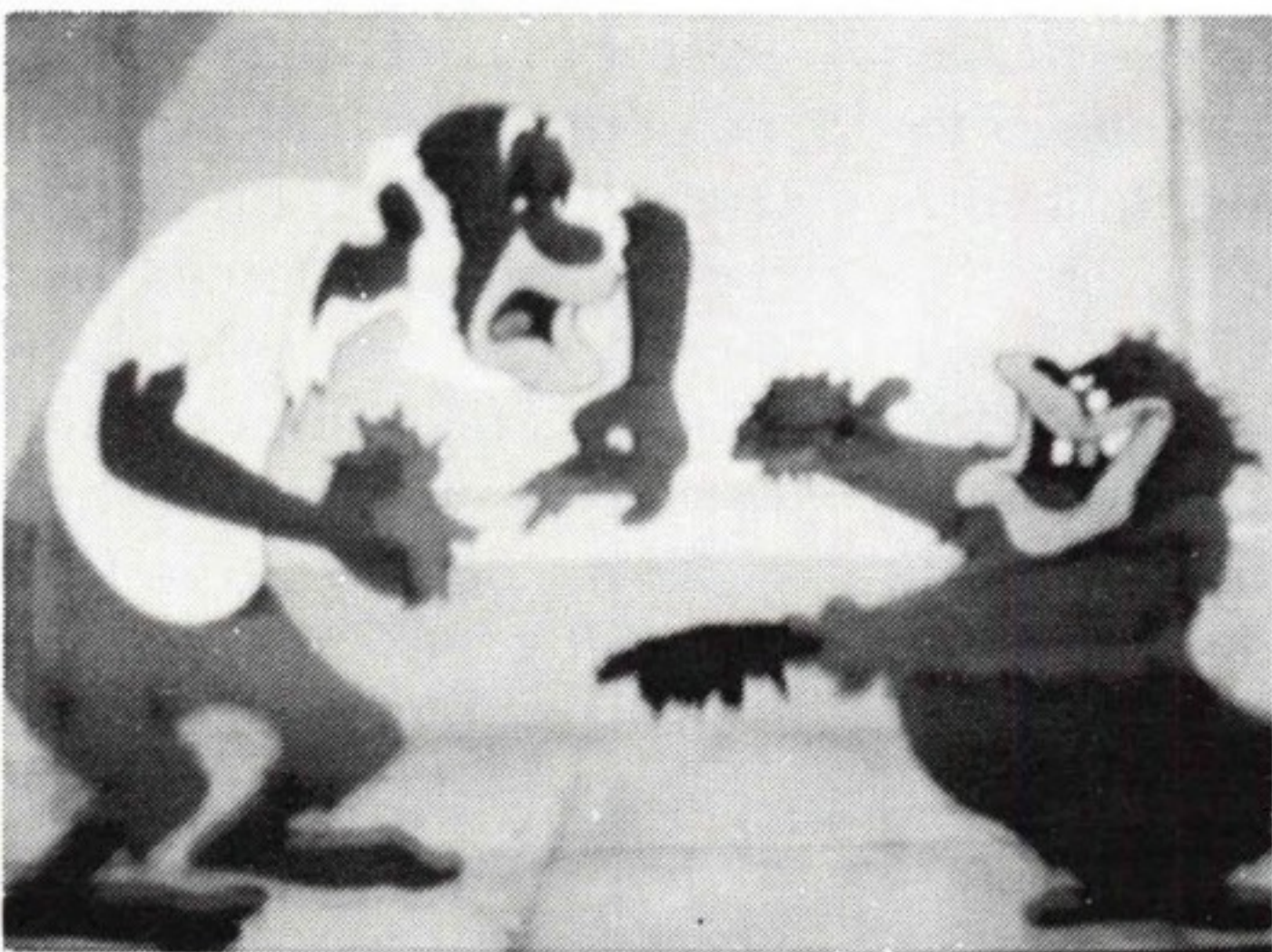
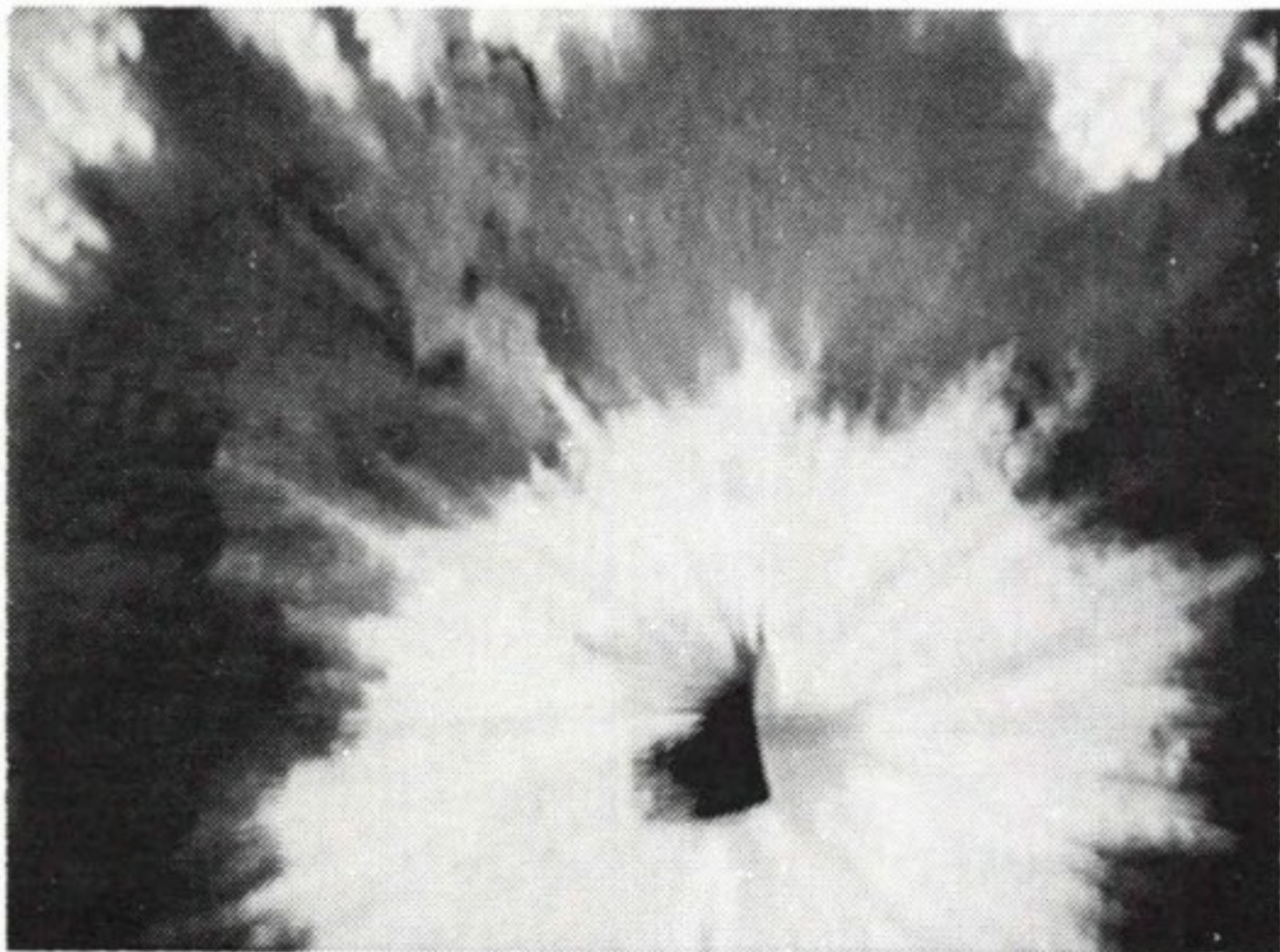
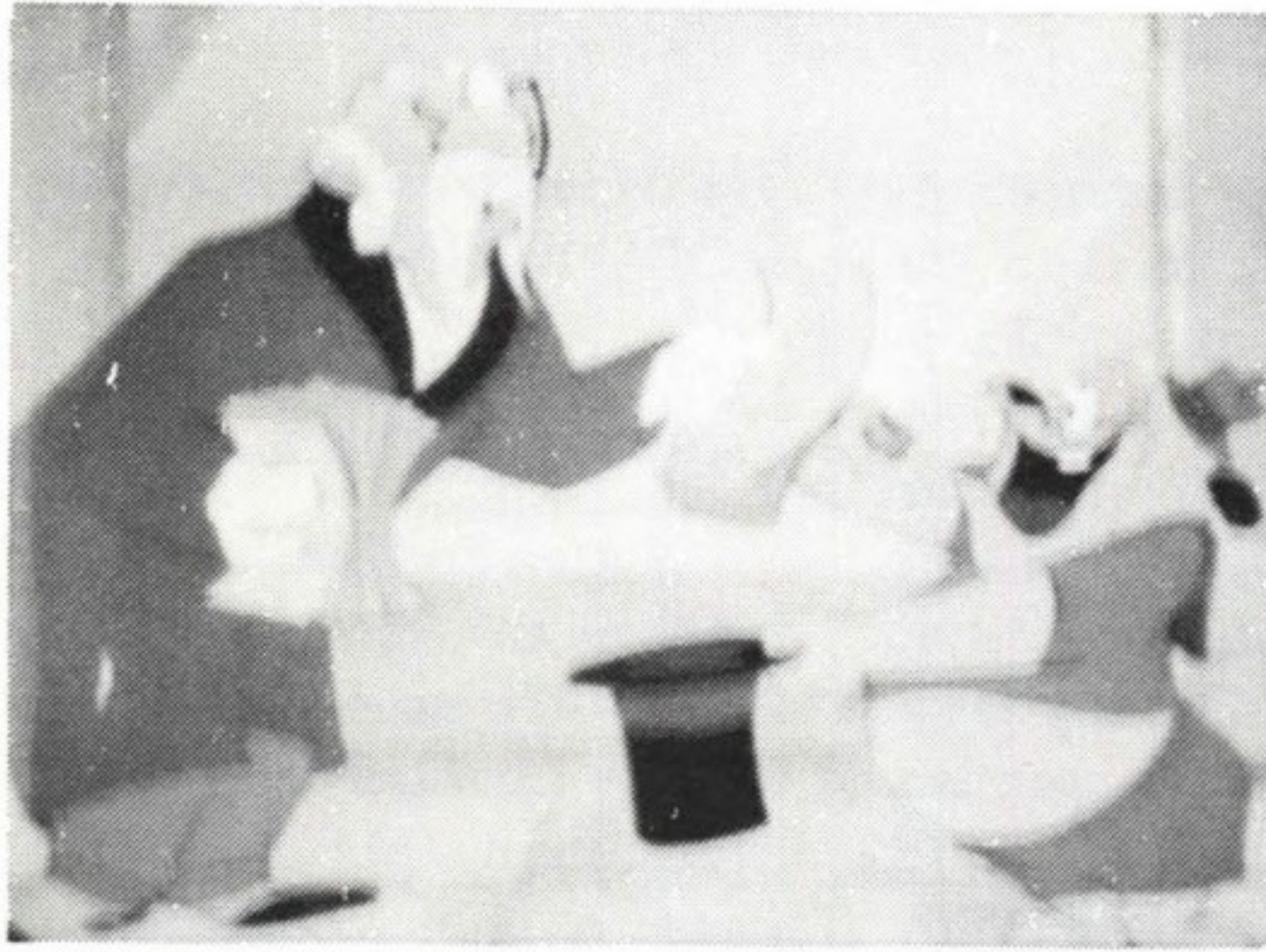
but also references to tobacco and alcohol that are habitually censored on television.

To see all 67 of Tex Avery's MGM cartoons in the order of their release is an eye-opening prospect. Side One finds Avery rediscovering his voice at a new studio (after seven years at Warner), poking fun at wartime and wartime stars, especially Red Skelton. Although he invented Droopy (his most enduring MGM creation) in his third outing, there was a two year detour—the "Screwy Squirrel" years, most of which appear on Side Two—before he realized what he had wrought; Screwy was actually *murdered* in "**Lonesome Lenny**," his fifth cartoon ("Sad ending, isn't it?"). A similarly amusing and short-lived fling with the **OF MICE AND MEN**-inspired bears "George & Junior" segued into Avery's richest vein of all, a series of one-shot cartoons that found animation's greatest maverick rejecting recurring characters in favor of revels in the fine art of exaggeration. Much of his best-loved and most influential work—"Bad Luck Blackie," "**King Size Canary**," "**Slap Happy Lion**"—occurs during this interval. Even a lesser cartoon from this period, "**Little 'Tinker**" [1948], finds Avery toying with a randy skunk who speaks like Charles Boyer, and falls mistakenly in love with a painted female. (Although Chuck Jones had already introduced a prototype of Pépé Le Pew in "**Odor-able Kitty**" [1945], he did not adopt him as a lead character or introduce the "painted faux-skunk" element until "**Scentimental Romeo**" [1951]—three years after "**Little 'Tinker**." On the other side of this apex of apoplectic creativity, Avery settled into a fine series of "blackout" cartoons starring Droopy and his nemesis Spike, garnished with occasional

uproarious gems like "**Magical Maestro**" and "**Symphony in Slang**." By 1953, the lavish production values of the earlier toons was downscaled to reflect the influence of the UPA cartoons. Animation's favorite Texan met the challenge well with the simplified style of such cartoons as "**The Three Little Pups**" and "**Billy Boy**," before leaving MGM in 1956.

On a nit-picking note, **THE COMPLEAT TEX AVERY** isn't quite "complete." The best-available source prints of two cartoons—"Garden Gopher" and "**Droopy's Good Deed**"—are lacking approximately 10s each of explosions turning Spike the Bulldog and others into black-faced caricatures. (These omissions are clearly not MGM/UA's fault, because a wealth of such material remains in evidence; indeed the latter cartoon still contains one such transformation and Droopy's scandalous response, "Hey Blackie, any more babes in there?") Clock-watchers can find "**Garden Gopher**"'s incomplete gag commencing at 41/38:07, "**Droopy's Good Deed**"'s at 46/18:44.

Also requiring a Watchdoggian appraisal are the last two cartoons, "**Millionaire Droopy**" and "**Cat's Meow**," the Cinemascope remakes of Avery's "**Wags to Riches**" and "**Ventriloquist Cat**" produced by William Hanna and Joseph Barbera. Letterboxed at approximately 2.25:1, these cartoons are credited to Avery but were actually made *after* his departure from the studio. These "remakes"—never shown on TV for obvious reasons—are in fact badly-cropped, re-colored refilms of Avery's classics, with new background art credited to Don Driscoll. The foreground art and soundtracks are actually taken from the



*Frames missing from "Droopy's Good Deed" on MGM/UA's THE COMPLEAT TEX AVERY:
"40... 45... 50..." -- **BANG!!** -- "...55... 95... 120... 72... Nine billion trillion and two bills..."*

original toons, with the narrow widescreen frame constantly tipping up and down to capture crucial offscreen elements. By comparing the remakes to the originals, the deterioration of the backgrounds is particularly evident, replacing sumptuous, realistic detail with poorly-colored, UPA-style flatness. That said, the presence of these

novelties feels correct and informative, and it was thoughtful of producers George Feltenstein and Jerry Beck to include them, allowing the rest of us to judge them as the tasteless, historic footnotes they are.

One last gripe of wrath. As Tex himself might have noted, "Flimsy box, isn't it?" MGM/UA

Home Video are to be commended for making their animation holdings available in such great gulps, but any box expected to hold five discs and a colorful info leaflet should be made deeper and sturdier.

[Thanks to Carsten Hagemeyer of Rheda, Germany for bringing these cuts to our attention.]

DEATH BECOMES HER

1992, MCA Universal #41279/
#41424, LB/D/S/SS/CC, \$34.98,
102m 52s

The most recent film from director Robert Zemeckis is a superficial parody of Hollywood's preoccupation with youth. A miscast Bruce Willis stars as a gifted plastic surgeon whose troubles begin in 1958, when he rejects mousy fiancée Helen (Goldie Hawn) for her best friend, the glamorous stage actress Madeline (Meryl Streep). Seven years later, Hawn is a grotesquely overweight basket-case, Streep is a domineering haridan terrified of losing her looks; Willis has become a mortician, having lost his surgical talents to liquor. Seven years later, "Mad" and "Hel" meet again, looking better than ever—having partaken of the youth-restoring potion of sorceress Isabella Rossellini—and both unable to die, no matter how many attempts they make to damage or destroy one another.

There is a lot to admire in this film, but it is all technical—Dean Cundey's flamboyant photography (the backtrack-through-the-candelabras shot is fun to replay), Dick Smith's macabre makeup, and ILM's amazing, cartoon-like abuses of Hawn and Streep. Like a lot of Zemeckis' work, **DEATH BECOMES HER** shows no appreciation for the light touch of satire, and is too loud, broad, and top-heavy with spending to be very likeable. The particular failure of this film is that its fantasy components are never amplified naturally, with injections of realism; instead, it's false and glitzy from the get-go. As a result, its only option for amazing the audience is to take them beyond magic into the outer reaches of grotesquerie. As the nagging plot limps into the home stretch, Martin Donovan and

David Koepp's script connects its triangular domestic feud to the fabulous premise that a lot of supposedly dead celebrities—Elvis, James Dean, Marilyn Monroe, Jim Morrison, even Andy Warhol—are still alive and young and living "underground" in Beverly Hills. Had *this* been the film's premise, revealed after a realistic prologue, Zemeckis might have had a film; introduced so late in the picture, the screenplay's masterstroke seems only the biggest in a parade of exaggerations in a live-action cartoon. Only the film's epilogue, set many years in the future, displays any genuinely wicked wit.

MCA Universal is making the film available on disc in full-screen and letterboxed editions. As with Zemeckis' **BACK TO THE FUTURE** series and **WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT?**, **DEATH BECOMES HER** was composed for 1.85 and shot with an unmasked lens, while the special effects sequences were photographed in masked 1.85 VistaVision. The result is that the full-screen version offers more top-and-bottom visual information during the unadorned dramatic sequences, but crops the image peripherally during the special effects highlights. The letterboxed edition (a perfect 1.85 transfer) gives full reign to the effects scenes, while modestly cropping the vertical extremities of the frame elsewhere. Unless you're buying the disc expressly for the effects footage, we would recommend the full-screen version, which offers marginally crisper resolution, noticeably punchier surround audio, and more generous views of Isabella. The humorous picture sleeve design shows Streep dressed in red and Hawn in white—actually, the *opposite* of their color schemes in the film itself!

THE GREAT ROCK 'N ROLL SWINDLE

1980, Warner Reprise Video,
#9383196, D, \$34.98, 99m 47s

Written and directed by Julien Temple, this history of The Sex Pistols—the awesome and (at least for one member, literally) short-lived band that spearheaded Britain's punk movement—is a fantastic *collage* of interviews, documentary footage, music videos, stolen network news footage, animation, and cleverly faked documentary footage, all tied together with a loose dramatic framework starring Pistols manager Malcolm McLaren and guitarist Steve Jones. McLaren, portrayed as the group's architect, contradicts the very spontaneity of punk by outlining for the adulation of two punkette acolytes (Liz Fraser and Irene Handl) the "10 Lessons" that enabled the Pistols to achieve four hit singles in the UK, although they had no musical training, couldn't be heard on the radio, and were forced to play their concerts in strict secrecy. After McLaren bathes in notoreity, we catch up with Jones (who suggests a Cockney Steve Guttenberg) after the film's "release" in a Soho theater, where he watches in astonishment as the collapse of his own celebrity unfolds onscreen.

The film contains some great music—with the Pistols' songs adapted to so many different musical styles (classical, disco, musical comedy, etc.) as to make their compositional skills undebatable—but its narrative continuity is so jagged that the sense it makes is ultimately dependent on how much one already knows about the band's tempestuous history. Sadly, **TGR&RS** suffered considerable post-production trauma: bassist Sid Vicious, who



*The Sex Pistols (Paul Cook, Johnny Rotten, Sid Vicious, Steve Jones) on the ramp in **THE GREAT ROCK 'N ROLL SWINDLE**.*

displays a promising charisma here, killed his girlfriend Nancy Spungeon and overdosed on heroin; Pistols vocalist Johnny Rotten (née Lydon, who later starred in **CORRUPT**, 1983) sued to have all non-performance footage of himself removed from the picture; and no mention was permitted of Russ Meyer, making nonsense of the Brazilian outtakes from Meyer's aborted **WHO KILLED BAMBI?** project (note uncredited Meyer alumnus Henry Rowland in his recurring "Martin Bormann" role). Also featured in the eclectic supporting cast are Ronnie Biggs (one of Britain's Great Train Robbers), James Aubrey (the former child star of Peter Brook's **LORD OF THE FLIES**) and, of all people, SHIVERS editor/VW contributor Alan Jones (that's him in the mask and wetsuit, being reeled-in by the topless girl at the Cambridge Rapist Hotel). The film's highlights are scenes from the Pistols' incendiary performance at the Longhorn Ballroom in Texas (at 21/13:04, you can actually see *blood* on the camera lens!), the entire "Sid in Paris" sequence which concludes with him "shooting" his mother from the stage during a valedictory

performance of "My Way" (this should help to explicate for many American viewers the same scene's recreation in Alex Cox's **SID AND NANCY**, 1986), and the main title sequence—one of the most exciting marriages of rock music and montage I've seen.

Meticulously encoded with 31 chapters (making each of the songs and "lessons" instantly accessible), Warner Reprise's disc is almost identical in content to Virgin Video's popular Japanese import; the import featured a more resonant side break, but the domestic version eliminates the optical fogging that plagued several shots of male genitalia and feigned fornication on the import. Though the film was never rated by the MPAA, it revels in explicit language and imagery; the absence of any kind of rating or parental advisory on the sleeve is a bit irresponsible. The sleeve also promises a stereo presentation, though the film was never mixed in stereo; additionally, the music appears to have been recorded at the same levels as the dialogue, depriving the Pistols' sound of its visceral kick. Also available on Warner Reprise cassettes for \$19.98.

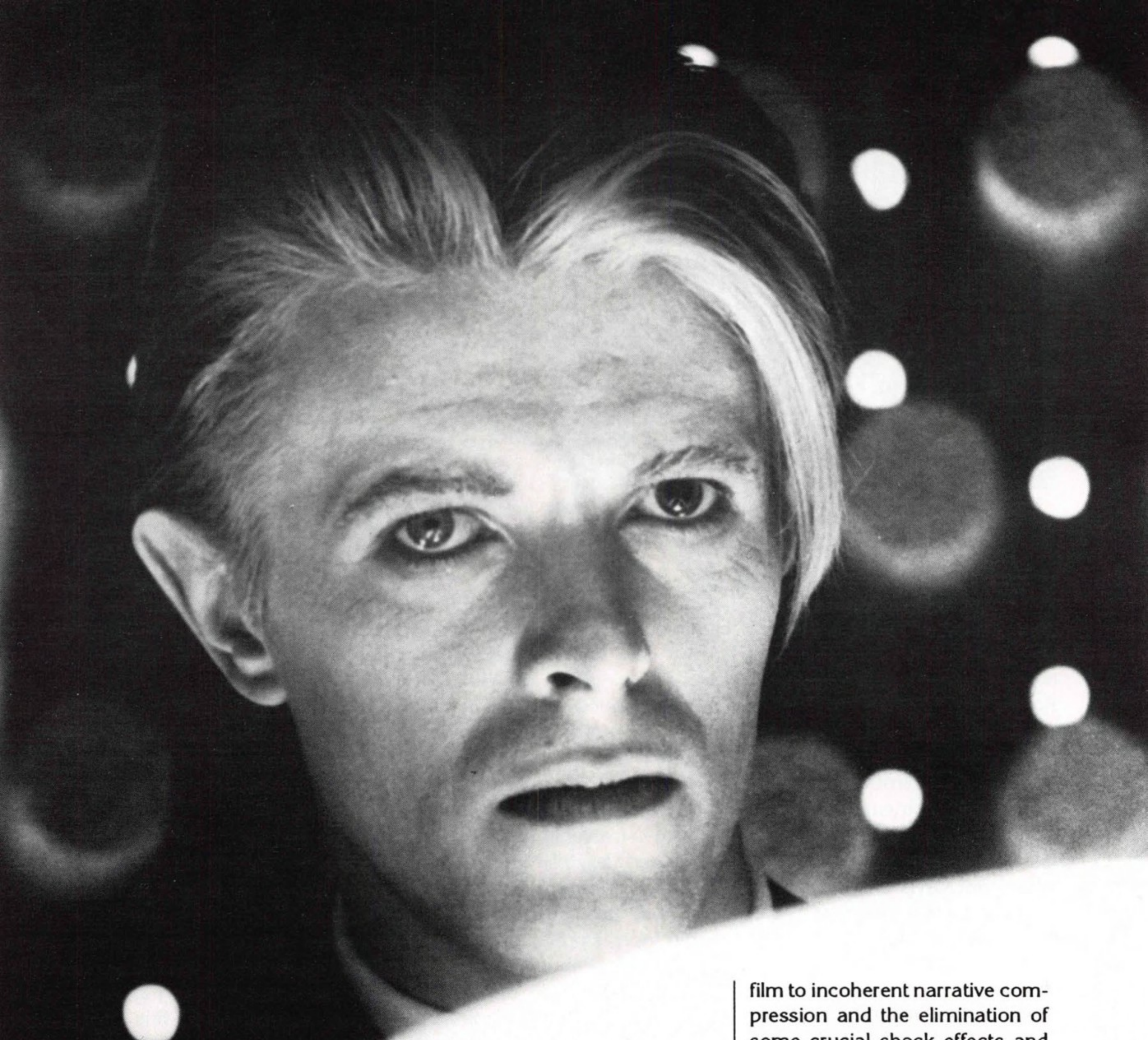
THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH

1976, Voyager/Criterion

#CC1312L, LB/D/S/MA, \$99.98, 138m 35s (CAV/CLV)

A mysterious stranger—Thomas Jerome Newton (David Bowie)—appears in Haneyville, New Mexico with a brace of golden rings and a wad of \$100 bills. Using these, Newton makes his way to New York City, where he astounds attorney Oliver Farnsworth (Buck Henry) with nine basic patents, guaranteeing him a virtual monopoly on the photographic, electronics, and communications industries. Forming World Enterprises with Farnsworth, Newton retreats into private life in New Mexico, where he is befriended by Mary Lou (Candy Clark), an alcoholic hotel maid. As the years pass, it becomes evident that Newton is an alien sent to Earth to accrue wealth for the purpose of transporting water back to his dying, drought-stricken planet. Unfortunately, the earthly gravities of alcohol and wealth ultimately make it impossible for him to leave.

To my way of thinking, Nicolas Roeg's **THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH**—based on the fine 1963 novel by Walter Tevis (**THE HUSTLER**)—is the turning point in English-language SF filmmaking that **BLADE RUNNER** is often assumed to be. Science fiction was always a literature of ideas, concerned with man's capacity to cope with the futuristic externalization of his own imagination; much like Andrei Tarkovsky's earlier **SOLARIS** (1972), Roeg's film features almost no special effects, and the few that do appear (courtesy of Peter Ellenshaw) are meant less to amaze us than to train the eye internally. Amazingly, virtually all of Newton's once-incredible innovations—self-developing film,



*Thomas Jerome Newton visits his rescue ship in **THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH**.*

disposable cameras, digitally recorded music, multi-channel viewing, even the odd notion of entrepreneurs appearing in their own TV commercials—have come true since this remarkable film's release less than twenty years ago; even more amazing is the fact that, deprived of this last vestige of practical futurism, **THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH** continues to engage our imaginations, perhaps more effectively than ever before.

TMWFTE was first released in America in a heavily-truncated, 118m version distributed by Cinema V, which subjected Roeg's

film to incoherent narrative compression and the elimination of some crucial shock effects and erotic sequences. It is this cut version that was initially released on tape and disc by RCA Columbia Home Video in the early 1980s; the film, photographed in Panavision by Anthony Richmond, was additionally savaged by a hideous, pan/scan video transfer. In the late 1970s, the film enjoyed a brief second life on the theatrical repertory circuit, for which it was restored to its original, unrated length. In 1988, RCA Columbia issued this unexpurgated version on videocassette, but it was not an altogether happy occasion; the pan/scan transfer was faded,



David Bowie and Candy Clark (with child) as the dehydrating alien family in THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH.

muddy-looking and, like the previous edition, presented the original densely detailed, stereo soundtrack in lifeless, self-obscur-ing mono.

Thankfully, these earlier, unwatchable editions are now rendered obsolete by this deluxe, two-disc "Criterion Collection" set, which presents the restored version in a magnificent, true stereo transfer, perfectly letterboxed at 2.35:1. The colors may be noticeably less saturated than they were on the reissue prints—Bowie's metallic red hair no longer burns so unnaturally bright when he first removes his hood, in a way that made at least one audience of my acquaintance gasp—but the color looks quite impeccable in a natural, unaugmented sense. The transfer is razor sharp with no discernable decrease in resolution on Side Three, the CLV side of this otherwise CAV pressing.

Additionally, it is hard to imagine a better indexed laserdisc; the film itself is TOC-encoded with 55 chapters, and it is followed with 7 supplementary stops.

The restoration of the film's highly sophisticated, stereophonic landscape is deserving of a paragraph or two of its own. Simply put, **TMWFTE** isn't the same experience without stereo, and its retrieval for this laserdisc presentation is singularly significant. Just as the opening scenes confront Newton with earthly strangeness—a clown-faced amusement park ride, an abusive and prophetic drunk—the audio complements are equally subjective in their accentuated strangeness: the scattering of gravel underfoot, the richness of running water, the horns of passing cars, and a sensitivity to radio and television waves, which we often hear as the camera pans across an otherwise empty sky.

The voices, in most cases, are centrally mixed, while the excellent soundtrack music (most of it by Stomu Yamash'ta and John Phillips) and sound effects are given superb directional placement. During Newton's first visit to Farnsworth's apartment (Chapter 5), a close listening reveals a sublimated tapestry of informative sounds, multi-tracked with painterly delicacy between the left and right channels: the ringing of a background telephone (suggesting that Farnsworth's valuable time is in constant demand), and the soft, celestial chiming of a late hour as he seats himself to examine Newton's electronics patents. While he reads, Newton passes the time (we're in Chapter 6 already!) by admiring the stars from a picture window, fireworks which are synchronized with the mournful songs of humpbacked whales (recurrent in Chapter 23/Frame

32166), insinuating the sad and personal urgency of Newton's earthly mission. During the later scenes in the Hotel Artesia, it is the melange of ambient sounds (confused at best, inaudible at worst in mono) of a dolorous Jim Reeves ballad, a religious radio broadcast, a crying baby, and an obscene lovers' quarrel—all filtering through the walls from surrounding rooms—that color the setting, simulating Newton's sensitivity to “waves in space” and foreshadowing his eventual addiction to sensory overstimulation.

While the narrative imagery sprints across the decades—note that Nathan Bryce (Rip Torn) is first driven to World Enterprises headquarters in a limo with 1972 license plates (17/13808), which would establish the film's opening scenes as early as *the mid 1960s*—it is the soundtrack that grounds these accelerating scenes to a continuity of purpose and emotion. The fullness of the stereo mix is also conveyant of great warmth and emotional complexity—as during Newton's limo ride in the country, set to The Kingston Trio's “Try to Remember,” which prompts him to recall a former family outing on a planet much greener than when he left it—a strong rebuttal to the critical assertions that the film is overly intellectual and unfeeling.

What makes repeated viewings of this film so rewarding, is Roeg's distinctively fluid presentation of sounds and images as a sensuous continuum that closely approximates the mysteries of daily living—for instance, the way activities are fluidly bisected by detours through memory, or the way offhanded remarks sometimes assume a special significance in light of future

events (as when Farnsworth testifies, “When Mr. Newton entered my apartment, my old life went straight out the window”). By scrutinizing an oddly interrupted take of Newton entering his limosine in New York (10/30246), we see that the splice permits the shot to include a passing bus advertisement for Gordon's vodka—the kind of detail that CAV was made to suss out. Among the images “arbitrarily” viewed by Newton on his multi-screen console (appropriate word!) are Terence Stamp in **BILLY BUDD** (foreshadowing his betrayal), a Frisbee commercial (flying saucers), crashing jet pilots (obvious), lions mating (sex with other species), Elvis Presley in **TICKLE ME** (alluding to Bowie's rock star-cum-actor status), Karel Zeman's **THE FABULOUS WORLD OF JULES VERNE** (the dawn of science fiction), and so forth. On Side Three, nearer the end of the film, an overheard scene from **THE THIRD MAN** (“Poor Harry”) prompts an aging Mary Lou to sigh “Poor Tommy.” Newton is watching the film simultaneously and just before Mary Lou is reunited with him after many years, at 45/57:03, she walks past a papered wall in his hotel prison that bears the traced likeness of the tree-lined road where the closing shot of **THE THIRD MAN** is staged. The synchronicity continues with Mary Lou's offer of a drink to Bryce on Side Four, which prompts the same reply that signals Newton's “fall” on Side One: “Why not?” Indeed, Roeg's involuted techniques seem born to the laser medium, where it is less of a chore, and more of a challenge to chart such narrative echoes and connections. (Say! Isn't that a display for Bowie's **YOUNG AMERICANS** album in the record store at 53/28478?)

The second analog track features running commentaries by

Nicolas Roeg, David Bowie, and Buck Henry, which I rather naïvely expected to emphasize and analyze some of these dazzling brushstrokes. In fact, the commentary tracks offer little information of a technical or background nature. When Newton sees a white stallion racing alongside his car (21/23528) and remembers two such horses on his home planet (21/25087), I thought Roeg might discuss why he likes to put unexplained horses in his films; he doesn't. (According to Joseph Lanza's book **FRAGILE GEOMETRY** [VW 4:57-61], Roeg photographed a white horse on a grassy knoll that supernaturally eluded being captured on film, while working as Director of Photography on John Schlesinger's **FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD** in 1967.) Two other undiscussed points of interest are the uncredited performance of the late **PLAYBOY** model/actress Claudia Jennings as the pirate executive (Bernie Casey)'s wife, and the fact that Candy Clark was body-doubled during much of the “gun sex” scene by a woman of Mary Lou's then-post-menopausal age (a startling effect that Roeg would later use to portray the physical effects of malnutrition in the 1987 film **CASTAWAY**).

Instead, the director and star engage in a heady discussion of the film's broader themes—alienation, for example—and our tendency as human beings (as Bowie aptly remarks) “to forget to make sense of what we've created... to cover more ground, but not more thoroughly.” As Newton watches his wall of television monitors, Roeg delivers the most memorable line, “The future will be looking back at the past all the time.” In one of his few concessions to brushstroke analysis, Roeg explains why Oliver Farnsworth cries “Ruth” as he is thrown to his death,

Background: Bowie in alien makeup.

and offers an interesting insight as to why Buck Henry was uncomfortable delivering it. Henry's witty and casual commentary provides the most satisfying insights to the production itself, demonstrating an awareness of not only Roeg's work, but the history of filmed science fiction as well. In the end, the commentaries are *better* than if they had lived up to my expectations; they serve as food for thought, and we can continue to discover this masterpiece for ourselves, without having been told where and for what to look.

The length of the film, and its CAV presentation, has limited the available room for supplementary materials, but there are a few. The American trailer (narrated by William Shatner!), American and British teaser trailers, and a short TV spot are included, as is a look at Roeg's continuity book, some wardrobe sketches, and the script of one brief deleted scene. Although no contextual information is given, the British teaser contains a fleeting "fish-eye" Alien POV shot of Candy Clark joking around in her Sunday Best, presumably deleted from the environs of the New Mexico church sequence.

With this release, Voyager has rescued **THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH** from the hands into which it had the misfortune to fall, recovering its original beauty for those of us who have longed to see it this way again, and for future generations of admirers. One hopes that it will be successful enough to prompt Voyager to undertake an entire series of Roeg releases, as they've done with Terry Gilliam's perhaps less-essential catalog. After all, is there anyone reading this review who wouldn't love to see **WALKABOUT** (1971) again, or hear a Roeg/Sutherland/Christie commentary for **DON'T LOOK NOW** (1973)?



Lester Guy (Ian Buchanan) sends you the smile of good fellowship in ON THE AIR, now available as a laserdisc import.

ON THE AIR

1992, Amuse/Pioneer ASLF-5021, D/S/SS, ¥6,901, 161m

This welcome Japanese import assembles the entirety of David Lynch and Mark Frost's short-lived sitcom, which played (in non-consecutive order) last summer on the ABC network; it lasted three weeks. In addition to those episodes, this two-disc compilation contains four episodes never shown in this country and offers a much clearer delineation of the show's intentions than was apparent from their jumbled domestic unveiling.

Set in 1957 Manhattan, **ON THE AIR** is a Dadaistic comedy about the days of live television production, with each episode broken into two acts: the rehearsal (how things should be) and the live broadcast (how things break down) of "The Lester Guy Show." The star of the show, Lester Guy (played with delightfully insipid

insouciance by Ian Buchanan—who played much the same character under the name "Richard Tremaine" in the second season of **TWIN PEAKS**), is the has-been star of a little-known flop called **PICCADILLY CIRCUS**, which happens to be the favorite movie of the president of the Zoblotnick Broadcasting Company—hence, host-dom. Unfortunately for him, anything that can go wrong on a given broadcast *does*, making him look like a boob and elevating his buxom, dimwitted co-star Betty Hudson (Nancye Ferguson) to the heights of celebrity. The supporting cast is an engaging mixture of the curt, the cute, and the curious: Buddy Budwaller (Miguel Ferrer), a tough-talking network executive with his "Mr. Squiggly" perennially on the line; Volodya Gottczyk (David L. Lander), a director from the Old Country whose quirkily mispronounced English requires that his every word be repeated by his ever-patient assistant Ruth

(Marla Jeanette Rubinoff); McGonigle (Gary Grossman), the cuddly but nerve-rattled producer; Nicole (**CRY-BABY**'s Kim McGuire), Lester's shrewish publicist; and, neither last nor least, Blinky (Tracey Walter), a sound engineer afflicted with Boazman's Simplex, a bombardment of sight that makes him accident-prone.

The first episode (broadcast June 20, 1992), scripted by Lynch and Frost, is the only one directed by Lynch; it's easily the series' finest half-hour. The first act is aggressively odd and a trifle forced, but the second act is a brilliantly sustained blend of humor and experimentia.

The second episode, never broadcast here, is a direct sequel that establishes the rivalry between Lester and Betty that is essential to the remaining half-dozen shows. After the surprise success of the error-ridden premiere broadcast, Betty becomes an overnight star and is invited to dinner by Mr. Zoblotnick himself (mischievously played by Sidney Lassick). Lester, increasingly jealous, conspires with Budwaller and Nicole to ensure that the date is not professionally advantageous, and poses as both a chauffeur and an Italian waiter. The episode features portions of unintelligible Zoblotnick-speak that are subtitled in both English and Japanese; it was written by Mark Frost and directed by Lesli Linka Glatter.

Side Two opens with the third episode, scripted by Robert Engels and directed by Jack Fisk (**ERASERHEAD**'s "Man in the Planet"), which ABC aired on June 27, 1992. This week's guest is Professor Answer (**HAROLD AND MAUDE**'s Charles Tyner), who is pitted against brainless Betty in a fixed game of "Wennar Tukas Ull" (that's "Winner Takes All") that predictably backfires.

Jonathan Sanger directed the fourth show, a Scott Frost script that is mostly distinguished by the guest appearance of Lynch stalwart Freddie Jones, as flatulent Shakespearean actor Stan Tailings. Despite its backstage *milieu* of mariachi bands and quacking ducks, the weirdness never gels and dissipates in nightmarish flashing lights and screams better suited to one of BOB's appearances on TWIN PEAKS.

Side Three begins with another Mark Frost/Lesli Linka Glatter collaboration, the charming "Mr. Peanuts" episode that marked ON THE AIR's July 4, 1992 swansong. Betty is disturbed that this week's guest will be Sylvia Hudson (Ann Bloom), her sadistic older sister. Sylvia gets her comeuppance when she finds her guest spot supported by Mr. Peanuts, an unkempt little hand-puppet operated by Wally Walters (Chuck McCann). The show reaches its mad climax with Lester playing a romantic lead in a two-person playlet, opposite three actresses all playing the same part: Sylvia, who's been knocked senseless and doesn't know that she's on the air; Betty, who doesn't know the lines but wants to help; and Mr. Peanuts, a word-perfect puppet in drag! The program also features a theme song for Mr. Peanuts, the lyrics of which are helpfully (if incorrectly) included on the sleeve's inside spread. (The fifth word in "He can take a crowd and turn it upside-down" should be "frown.")

Episode Six—written by Robert Engels and directed by former HILL STREET BLUES actress Betty Thomas—finds "The Lester Guy Show" minutes away from broadcast with their special guest, the gypsymagician The Great Presidio (I.M. Hobson). Trouble is, Presidio is so disturbed by recent dreams of a cigar-smoking, top-hatted "Dog of Transformations" that he can't

remember who he is, or perform any magic. Lester sees an opportunity to upstage Betty for a change, by learning a few simple magic tricks. This segment is a must-see, if only for the nightmarish **FLY**-like image of Kim McGuire stepping out of a vanishing box—with her head on the body of a skittering iguana!

The final show, which occupies the whole of Side Four, was co-written by Lynch and Engels, and directed by Jack Fisk. Lester's final guest is "The Woman With No Name" (Bellina Logan), a macabre beatnik performance artist who reflects the host's fashionable interest in "downtown" culture. Mr. Gottczyk, thinking "beatnik" means "bootmaker," promptly falls in love with her and brings her all of his shoes; meanwhile, Betty has somehow forgotten her mother's name and wonders if "The Woman With No Name" might somehow be her mother. The program ends with everyone dancing with shoes on their hands, as a dog plays the bongoes. You had to be there.

Amuse/Pioneer have packaged this retrospective collection with style and taste, although it emphasizes David Lynch to a point that seems unfair to Mark Frost's greater involvement. American buyers will surely regret that the cast and episode information on the inner spread appears only in Japanese. The transfer quality is impeccable—appreciably crisper than that of the TWIN PEAKS series imports—and the stereo surround mix is rich, inventive, and full of presence and variety. Each episode carries its own chapter code for instantaneous access.

ON THE AIR was not a great, or even an important series, but it marked an adventurous moment in the ongoing saga of television comedy. Watched in its entirety,



Columbia ("Little Nell" Campbell), Magenta (Patricia Quinn), Dr. Frank N. Furter (Tim Curry), and Riff Raff (Richard O'Brien) in THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW.

with all seven episodes in their proper chronology, this funny little show assumes a quality that is less like a recent commercial failure, and more like a program that somehow filtered through to our airwaves from some alternative universe where chances are still taken, and not always seriously.

THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW

1975, FoxVideo #1974-80, D/S/CC, \$39.98, 98m 22s

If there had never been a Robert Fuest, Jim Sharman might possibly have passed for the James Whale of the 1970s. This elaborate, modestly-budgeted filming of Richard O'Brien's riotous stage musical is only a portion of Sharman's cinematic legacy of the fey and the bizarre. It was preceded by another aliens on motorcycles opus, **SHIRLEY THOMPSON**

VERSUS THE ALIENS (1968, released 1972) and **SUMMER OF SECRETS** (1974, released 1976, also starring "Little Nell" Campbell), an unsuccessful Art Deco fantasy that nevertheless comes closer to recapturing the flavor of **THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN** than any other attempt. While Fuest's films (**THE ABOMINABLE DR. PHIBES**, **THE FINAL PROGRAMME**) are genuinely witty, tasteful, and amusing, Sharman's movies are fetishistic, decorative, and uneven. None of his work seems to stand completely on its own, and it makes sense that his most popular film has endured not on account of its outrageous originality, but for its basic imitability.

Susan Sarandon and Barry Bostwick star as the newly betrothed Janet Weiss and Brad Majors, two virginal adults from Denton, Ohio. Returning home from a friend's wedding, they are

lost in bad weather and visit an ominous castle for the use of their phone. Met at the door by the hunchbacked butler Riff-Raff (O'Brien), Brad and Janet step into the annual convention of aliens from the planet Transsexual in the Transylvanian galaxy, hosted by the flaming transvestite monster-maker, Dr. Frank N. Furter (Tim Curry, in the much-too-early performance of a lifetime). After Dr. Furter bestows life on his Adonis-like creation, Rocky (Peter Hinwood), Brad and Janet are subjected to a series of vignettes that challenge and ultimately relax their sexual inhibitions. When their high school science teacher, Dr. Everett Van Scott (Jonathan Adams), arrives on the scene to investigate the disappearance of his rocker nephew Eddie (Meatloaf)—who has been killed and eaten by the Transsexuals—the plot begins to rapidly deteriorate, held tenuously

together by the hilarious commentary of a pompous Criminologist (Charles Gray).

Though advertised in the video press as a restored version—one that improves on FoxVideo's previous, incomplete videocassette releases—this premiere laserdisc pressing is in fact identical to them. To reiterate and supplement information originally reported here by reader Marc Edward Heuck [VW 9:3], **THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW** was originally released in America as a 95m film, 5m shorter than the original 100m British release. Among the deleted highlights was the film's concluding number, "Superheroes" (sung by the cast upon their return to the planet Transsexual), which was reinstated in theatrical prints for the film's 10th Anniversary reissue in 1985. When the film made its long-overdue domestic video debut in 1990, producer Lou Adler opted to "enhance" the original mono soundtrack by overdubbing all of the songs with the stereo versions from the movie's soundtrack album. As all of the vocals were sung live in the film by the actors, with different vocal inflections than were heard on the studio-recorded album, this revisionism resulted in the erasure of the audio portions of their original performances. The movie may have a better "rock" sound than ever, but it is untrue to the actual movie experience, and cosmetically corrupt. Furthermore, "Superheroes" has never been included on any NTSC videocassette release—allegedly because Adler wants it that way.

To make matters worse, the transfer itself is problematic. The end titles unfold in an approximately 1.60 letterbox, though the rest of the film is cropped; the loss may be informationally insignificant, but the image enlargement caused by the cropping has resulted in erratic resolution—sharp in closeups and long shots, dullish

in medium shots. The reds are also prone to mild distortion. Considering the film's low cost and the income it has generated in its abnormally long theatrical life, **TRHPS** deserves the justice of a more definitive edition. (We admit that the same is more urgently true of many better movies.)

The disc concludes with a meager supplementary chapter, entitled "**THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW: The Cult Film Experience**," which preceded the film on FoxVideo's initial cassette release in 1990. Despite the ambition inherent in its title, this 4m 38s short—essentially a music video for "Time Warp" photographed at an audience-participation screening—offers no insight to the phenomenon, and leaves one wondering what pleasure could possibly be found in slavishly imitating a film whose message is to stand tall—in platform heels, if necessary—and be yourself.


TELEVISION TOYS: COMMERCIALS FROM THE '50s & '60s

Voyager #V1065L, D, \$49.98, 108m

As a volcano erupts in primordial darkness, an announcer soberly intones, "You're witnessing the creation of an incredible new world! A world of unbelievable excitement and fun! The world of... *the Ding-a-Lings!*" So begins just one of 92 grippingly nostalgic commercials, compiled by the Voyager Company from the collection of Ira H. Gallen. The spots are arranged in topical clusters, with sections devoted to dolls, cars and trucks, space and aviation, spies and detectives, and western and military weaponry. The standouts are the introductory "Wide World of Toys" (including "Mr. Machine," "Creepy Crawlers," and the "Mystery Date" board game) and "Premiums," which gathers commercial tie-ins like cereal

boxtop offers and Soaky's Alvin and the Chipmunks bubble bath figures.

Though the sleeve contains a complete menu of all the toys being hawked herein, each commercial contains some unexpected surprise: a forgotten jingle, a memorable motto ("Every boy wants a Remco toy! And so do girls!"), or the way toys were once freely presented as being capable of feats they couldn't possibly perform (at the end of one minute-long spot, we're told in unnarrated print that the Flying Fox Jet Prop Airliner is "not a flying toy"). Adding to the surprise value of each commercial are unsuspected appearances by various child actors of the era: Patty Duke (for Remco's "Coney Island Penny Machine" and "Movieland Drive-In Theater"), Kurt Russell (for the "Zero-M Sonic Blaster" air cannon rifle), and—in an appearance that recalls his performance in the **ALFRED HITCHCOCK PRESENTS** episode "Bang! You're Dead"—Billy Mumy (for the "Dick Tracy Power Jet Gun"). Narration is also provided by the familiar voices of June Foray, Paul Frees, William Conrad, Mason Adams, and Daws Butler.

Taken from 16mm source material, the image quality is hardly state-of-the-art, but it is very good, and there are no pictorial defects to interfere with one's viewing pleasure. The program does wander astray once or twice from its set perimeters—there are a couple of toy company promo reels (longer than commercials, and aimed more at sales reps than children), and the Slinky commercial clearly dates from the early 1970s—but it all appeals to the same place, somewhere between one's adult curiosity and umbilical emotions. Watching this disc is like revisiting the birthplace of imagination. Every product included here is somebody's Rosebud. 

BIBLIO WATCHDOG

GRAVEN IMAGES

*The Best of Horror, Fantasy, and
Science Fiction Film Art
From the Collection of Ronald V. Borst*

Grove Press, 249 pages., \$50.00

Review by Tim Lucas

THIS DELUXE VOLUME collects between covers a wide-ranging assortment of fantasy film posters, production and promotional art, and magazine cover paintings owned by Ronald V. Borst. Perhaps best-known as the proprietor of Hollywood Movie Posters (a popular West Coast movie memorabilia shop), Borst is also well-remembered as a first-rate horror film journalist; his analysis of **HORROR OF DRACULA** (1957) for Mark Frank's late-lamented **PHOTON** remains essential reading. Happily, **GRAVEN IMAGES** represents the Borst of both worlds; the world-class collector has assembled more than 500 impossibly rare *objets d'choc*—with posters ranging from **THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI** (1919) to **2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY** (1968), all crisply reproduced in stunning, lifelike color—and the film scholar has scrupulously organized them into relevant, annotated groupings.

After a sweetly nostalgic Foreword about his early years in small New York towns (in which we follow his trajectory from horror enthusiast, to **FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND** reader, to victim of the toothsome Collecting Bug), Borst unveils his collection—usually two or three posters to a page, with full-page presentation reserved for titles of particular historic importance. (Borst's beloved **HORROR OF DRACULA**, for example, is given a two page spread representing different campaigns from all over the world.) Other materials are knowledgeably displayed according to studio (Republic serials), sequels (Universal's **MUMMY** and **INVISIBLE MAN** series), star (Rondo Hatton), producer (Val Lewton) and director (John Brahm, Mario Bava). The only glaring instance of poor organizational judgment is the



single-page combination of Curtis Harrington's **NIGHT TIDE**, Herk Harvey's **CARNIVAL OF SOULS**, and Herschell Gordon Lewis' **BLOOD FEAST**—all independent productions, yes, but hardly birds of a feather.) Along the way, Borst provides a running commentary of worthy asides—listing the contents of John Barrymore's potion in the 1920 **DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE**, pointing out that **THE LOST WORLD**'s poster erroneously depicts the film's Brontosaurus raid with an upright Allosaurus, mentioning that Warner Oland played “Boris Karlov” in **DRUMS OF JEOPARDY**, and recalling that the pulp violence of **THE RAVEN** (1935) led to a three-year ban on horror films in England. Also included are fascinating promotional materials for Universal Pictures that were never made: **FRANKENSTEIN** with Bela Lugosi, **CAGLIOSTRO** and **THE INVISIBLE MAN** with Karloff, and **DRACULA'S DAUGHTER**—directed by James Whale!

The materials are presented according to decade, with each gathering preceded by a “personal reminiscence” by one of the leading luminaries of fanta-fiction: Robert Bloch (1920s), Ray Bradbury (1930s), Harlan Ellison (1940s), Peter Straub (1950s), and Clive Barker (1960s). An Introduction by Stephen King and an Afterword by Forrest J. Ackerman round out the package. With the exception of Bloch’s vivid and refreshingly objective portrait of Twenties movie-going, the celebrity reminiscences really don’t rise to the occasion, revelling less in era than ego. We read them with more gratitude than pleasure, because the market that exists for their work—however minor—was most assuredly what saw this book into affordable print.

My only complaint about GRAVEN IMAGES (and I’m sure it must be Ron’s regret, too) is its failure to identify the artists behind much of this incredible legacy of graphic design. One notable exception is the author’s favorite poster—for Robert Florey’s **THE MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE** (1932), which has been cleverly modified to create the book’s jacket design—which Borst assigns to Karoly Grosz, “Universal’s outstanding poster designer.” While the breathtaking posters for **THE MUMMY**, **THE INVISIBLE MAN**, **THE BLACK CAT**, and **WEREWOLF OF LONDON** are clearly the work of one artist, we can’t be certain whether or not they are also Grosz’ work, because their style is altogether different from the gnomish, woodcut look adopted for the **MURDERS** poster. How nice it would have been if at least this one question had been addressed and answered. As it is, we are left to scrutinize the corners of various European posters, which sometimes offer a signature (like “Roland Coudon” on the French **FRANKENSTEIN** poster) to which we can attribute a personal style and measure of influence. There is an artistic continuity alive in these works that is just as significant as the directorial and cinematographic styles of the films they advertised, and it is tragic that the names of their creators have not been preserved.

This volume’s coverage ends in the late 1960s, when photographic images began to supersede those of the paintbrush on most one-sheets. Ironically, this was also the time when posters began to be designed by agencies rather than individuals. It is likely that a sequel to GRAVEN IMAGES, devoted to the poster art of the ’70s through the ’90s, wouldn’t have an impact comparable to this one—but I hope that Ron will someday compile a second volume, composed of the “ones that got away” (I would hasten to nominate the poster for **THE ASTOUNDING SHE-MONSTER**, 1958) and the best of what came later (the sutures-on-skin art for **ANDY WARHOL’S FRANKENSTEIN**, for example).

The majority of us—especially now, with the treasures of the Ackermansion on the verge of migrating to Berlin—will never have the opportunity to covet these posters “up close.” Today’s prices being what they are, few of us will ever manage to hang our favorites in our homes. Indeed, for most of us, GRAVEN IMAGES provides our first and only opportunity to admire these graphic masterworks in color. Because it represents one fan’s life-long dedication to preserving the artifacts of a film genre that might have otherwise been destroyed, lost, and forgotten, GRAVEN IMAGES is much more than a great film book. It is a gesture of supreme generosity.

TELEVISION HORROR MOVIE HOSTS

By Elena M. Watson

McFarland & Co. (Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640)

240 pages, \$29.95 (hardcover)

Review by Stanley Wiater

Although this volume is obviously a labor of love, TELEVISION HORROR MOVIE HOSTS is just as clearly an example of an author biting off more than she can chew. No one can fault Watson for narrow-casting—this is a claustrophobic study of the long line of late-night “horror movie hosts” on the independent television stations, who began in the early ’50s, peaked in the ’60s and continue sporadically to this day. Where Watson gets in trouble is by stating at the outset how there have been close to 200 horror hosts, nationwide. Yet the book’s subtitle is *68 Vampires, Mad Scientists and Other Denizens of the Late-Night Airwaves Examined and Interviewed*. In other words, the reader knows from the outset this volume is far from comprehensive, in spite of its already highly-focused subject matter.

The other fall which the author sets herself up for, is that the book is a series of interviews with these personalities. For anyone looking for a volume of in-depth interviews, this is not the case. What Watson does instead is an entertaining profile of each host’s show, so that we know everything there is to know about the basic concept (was the host in costume or scary make-up?), attitude (was the host a fan of these monster movies, or did they just make fun of them mercilessly?), and historical facts. But while the author was wise enough to put together this history of horror hosts chronologically, there is very little evidence remaining of direct contact with even the most famous of hosts and hostesses. (The profiles of Vampira, Zacherley and Elvira, for example, show no evidence that any of them ever spoke to the author.)

Rather than learn from the personalities themselves what it was like to be a horror host, Watson regrettably spends too much time explaining what their sets or costumes looked like, or how many of the hosts had no real expertise in horror movies—nor any apparently vivid memories of their experience. Although it's evident how much fun the author had "digging up" the "Where are they now...?" aspects of her profiles, the fact remains that 240 pages is nowhere near the amount of space required to give any of these personalities much more than a cursory examination; they all tend to blur after the first few dozen.

What is also seriously missing in TELEVISION HORROR MOVIE HOSTS is any sense of what importance (if any) this small yet still noteworthy

phenomenon may have had in the history of our popular culture. Apparently Watson concentrated her research in terms of covering merchandise tie-ins, and including appendices listing the film and record credits of the more successful personalities. Indeed, one of the most valuable aspects of the book is the wealth of rare stills of the hosts and their usually even more obscure film roles.

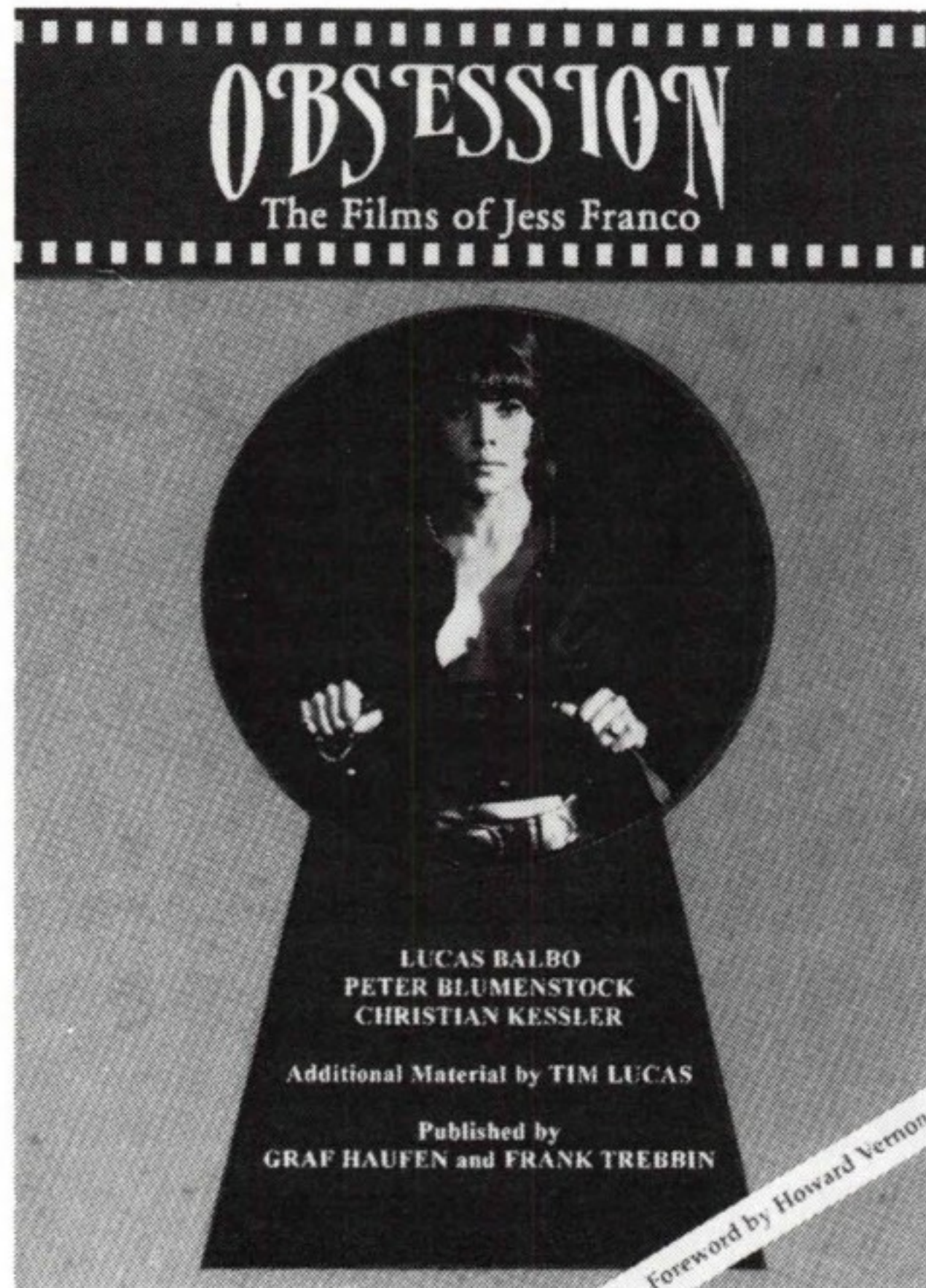
Ultimately, TELEVISION HORROR MOVIE HOSTS can be recommended as an initial look at a hitherto overlooked aspect of the horror movie in our society. On that level, the book is a very worthy and sincere first step. Yet the lack of cultural analysis or in-depth interviews also shows that much more could be done with this odd footnote in television history, which hopefully others will carry further from here.



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THE LETTERBOX

JASON VS. HERCULES

I read with great interest (as is the case with almost everything in your publication) your review of Criterion's **JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS** laserdisc [VW 15:65-66], of which I was co-producer with Curtis Wong, and appreciate everything that you had to say about it. I do want to comment, however, on one matter that you brought up in your article that I think requires a response.

I don't believe that, in my commentary, I ever particularly disparaged sword-and-sandal movies. I did make a comment about the limitations of the Steve Reeves film **HERCULES**, but only in terms of the scope and dimension of its fantasy elements, something that I think is fair; with all due respect to its dragon and Ape Men sequences, I think we can agree that it is a more downscale effort, in terms of any discussion regarding **JASON** (or, for that matter, **CLASH OF THE TITANS**).

That does not mean that I am unfavorably disposed to the genre. In fact, I happen to love both of Steve Reeves' **HERCULES** movies, and you may have seen my review of the letterboxed edition of **HERCULES** in VIDEO Magazine, in which I pointed out with some frustration the fact that they used the wrong audio track for the disc (the one in which Reeves' voice is higher, and all of the dialogue more wordy, than is necessary). I do appreciate these subtleties.

I don't think I ever indicated that **JASON** failed financially when it was released. (Ray has long believed that it would have done better if not for the sword-and-sandal competition, but I believe it turned a nice profit.) What I indicated, or

tried to, was that **THE FIRST MEN IN THE MOON** was neither fish-nor-fowl; that is, it came so late in the space movie cycle as to coincide with the real thing, and at the same time, it was too off-center for most audiences (especially for kids), with its late Victorian setting. **ROBINSON CRUSOE ON MARS** did much better, and was much more widely talked-about, with much greater enthusiasm among the kids I went to school with, and a lot of them went back to see that movie twice, which was definitely not the case with Ray's film.

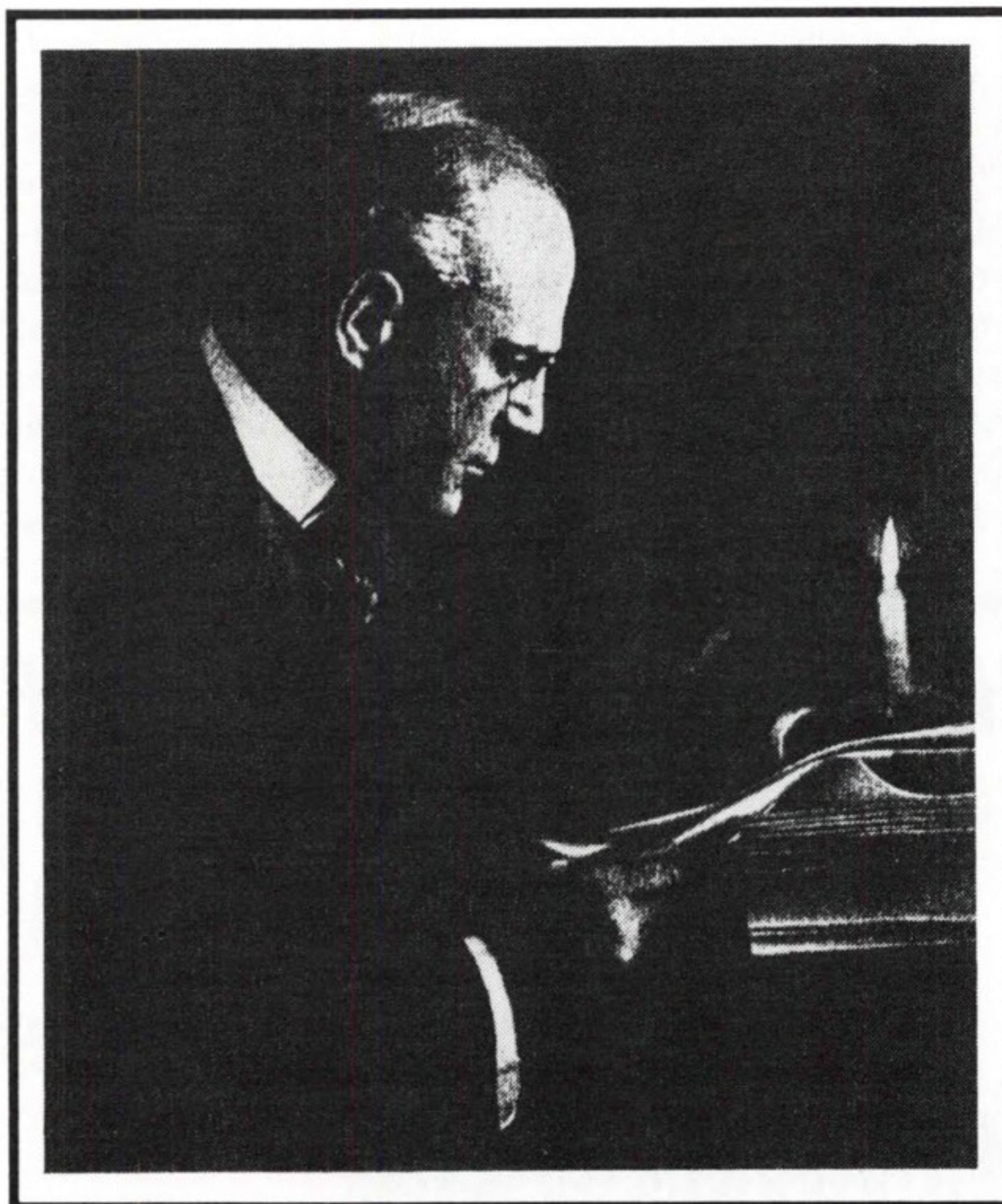
Anyway, I just wanted to clear that up, and to tell you that I really enjoy your publication, and look forward to picking it up with each new issue. And I really enjoyed [Bill Kelley's] Curtis Harrington article. Back when I was taking film

courses at Queens College, his experimental movies were the best I ever saw in any of those classes, and I've been trying for years to wrangle laserdisc releases of **NIGHT TIDE** and **VOYAGE TO THE PREHISTORIC PLANET**.

Bruce Eder
New York, NY

*Bruce's letter had to be somewhat condensed for publication, but it did convince me of his love for the Italian **pepla**. Some friends who also own the **JASON** disc agree with me that Harryhausen's commentary sounds more than a bit biased—perhaps because he disparages them*

Richard Mansfield, the first actor to portray Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, circa 1898.



almost immediately under the opening credits, claiming that they reduced the Greek myths to a kind of homoerotic girlie show. Actually, I prefer the Italian **HERCULES** films as films to most of Harryhausen's efforts because, aside from his masterful contributions, I find the Dynarama films poorly cast, indifferently directed, and blandly produced. I would personally save any of the Steve Reeves or Reg Park **HERCULES** films from a burning building before most of Harryhausen's work, and this minority opinion may have helped to fuel my impatience with his comments. I apologize if compositional haste led me to unfairly bunch Bruce's personal views in with Harryhausen's. In essence, as much as I loved the **JASON** disc for its restoration of Harryhausen's best work, its ferment would have been sweeter without the sour grapes.

KUDOS FOR CURTIS

We greatly appreciated your recent cover story [VW #14] on the career of Curtis Harrington. Having met Mr. Harrington, we can say that he is as honest and forthright as indicated in Bill Kelley's article and interview.

Mr. Harrington deserves special praise for giving his collaborators their due when discussing his accomplishments; in light of his sometimes caustic criticisms of those who don't measure up, his positive statements have added weight! In particular, his generous remarks concerning his longtime partner, producer George Edwards, were especially appreciated. As young filmmakers who were enriched by our relationship with George Edwards, we know we speak for many who were similarly touched by his special encouragement of the next generation of filmmakers. Yes, he will be missed—but, also long remembered.

Thank you for (co-)dedicating the issue to George Edwards, and we also thank Mr. Harrington for his kind words.

Anthony DiSalvo, Nancy Paloian and Tony Brewster
Los Angeles, CA

*I had the pleasure of meeting Curtis during my recent trip to Los Angeles, and found him to be as marvelous a host and raconteur as he is a filmmaker. He took impish pleasure in unfurling for me a European poster for **THE KILLING KIND** that bore the irresistible catch-line, "Have You Ever Wanted to Strangle Your Mother?" He also took the time to tell me the story of his dream-project, **CRANIUM**, and it's true: it would make one hell of a good horror movie.*

DON'T CUT THAT FILM—IT BLEEDS ACID!

I think somebody should know about this, and I guess you're the one to tell...

I'd been wanting Fox Video's **ALIEN** 3-pack [containing **ALIEN**, **ALIENS**, and **THE MAKING OF ALIEN³**] and finally got it for my birthday. A local TV station played **ALIEN** the week **ALIEN³** opened, so I didn't get around to watching my tape of it until a few nights ago. Guess what? *They cut the final shot of the alien!* Not the one where it bumps against the shuttle, but where it gets blown away and falls toward the camera! I don't imagine anything can be done about this, but with all your coverage of the movies, I just thought you should know.

Larry Becker
New York, NY

Who knows how or why these things happen? For what it's worth, the shot you describe was included on Fox Video's letter-boxed laserdisc edition of the film.

TITLE SEQUINS

VIDEO WATCHDOG has become an invaluable resource for laserdisc collectors like me, who prefer the insights of knowledgeable film buffs to those of techno geeks. Especially helpful was your review of The Voyager Company's **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST** disc [VW 13:45-46]. Cocteau's classic is one of those films that needs to be seen under the best possible conditions, making it a prime choice for the Criterion treatment.

I was dismayed to learn that they had not obtained the film's original French credit sequence. Here in Canada, the CBC's French channel often airs a wide range of classic films, including otherwise unavailable silents like Murnau's **FAUST** and works by Harold Lloyd and Buster Keaton. Their print of **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST** is a French original and retains the original credit sequence, which adds greatly to the film's charm.

It proceeds as follows:

Jean Cocteau appears before a shiny blackboard and writes in chalk the names of his principal actors—Jean Marais and Josette Day—who subsequently appear with their backs to the camera to erase them. Cocteau then writes "*dans un film de Jean Cocteau,*" which dissolves to the title "*illustré par Christian Berard,*" with a smudged drawing of Belle in the upper left corner of the screen. This is followed by a wipe to the title **La Belle et la Bête**, in Cocteau's handwriting, with a self-portrait sketched in the lower right corner. Cocteau's hand appears to draw the accent circumflex over "*Bête.*" Credits continue to appear in script, although this time superimposed, and Cocteau occasionally appears, pretending to erase them with a cloth. Finally, a superimposed logo for "DisCina Paris" appears, as a technician with a clapboard steps in front of the camera. Offscreen,

Cocteau can be heard saying, in French, "Lights, camera..." The technician says, *en français*, "Beauty and the Beast, take one" and claps the board shut. Cocteau's arm appears as he is heard saying, "Cut...one minute."

There is a wipe to black, followed by the familiar written intro, in French, wherein Cocteau asks the audience to become children again, concluding with "...let me tell you four magic words, a true *open sesame* to childhood: *Once upon a time...*" (Note: The sequence runs 1m 47s; with written prologue, 2m 46s.)

I hope those who purchase Voyager's **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST** will be able to keep this opening sequence in mind when they watch it, since it serves as a delightful gateway from the reality of filmmaking to the fantasy of the film itself.

Stephen Cooke
Dartmouth, Nova Scotia

I'd say this calls for a repressing. What do you say, Voyager?

THE DAY THE TAPES RAN SHORT

Since you folks seem to be the biggest video perfectionists I know (next to myself), I thought I would ask you about some of my recent video acquisitions.

I recently purchased what is supposedly the "10th Anniversary Edition" of **BLADE RUNNER** (1982). Actually, it's the 10th Anniversary box. In any case, the running time was approximately 117m 10s. It contained the gore scenes that were added to the original unrated video release. Two sources I have indicate that there is also a 123m version. In which state, country or planet is this version located? I have no knowledge of any version but the one I have.

Also, during the month of November, Cinemax broadcast **THE**

DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL (1951) in an 88m 30s version. All sources indicate this film is 92m. Did Cinemax time-compress the film to fit a 90m timeslot? Or is this the film's actual running time?

Lastly, also in November, Cinemax showed **TWO EVIL EYES** in a 115m version. I thought it was 121m. Again, this may be an edited print as I haven't seen the videocassette version. Cinemax advertises movies as being "uncut, uncensored and commercial-free." Commercial-free I agree with, but I'm skeptical about the other two.

Jim Reed
Tiffin, OH

*If they ever existed, the extra minutes of **BLADE RUNNER** may resurface in the "Original Director's Cut," which Warner Home Video will release on tape in May, and on CAV laserdisc this summer. In their pre-recorded forms, **THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL** runs 91m 54s, **TWO EVIL EYES** runs 119m 50s. I'd say the Cinemax versions were time-compressed.*

OUT WITH THE OLD, IN WITH THE NEW

Am I the only person who thinks our favorite magazine is turning into more of a fantasy mag than a horror mag? You're also covering more *old* movies than ever before. How about some more recent offerings (post-1970)? I know that other magazines cover these movies (Fulci, Argento, Soavi, D'Amato), but not with your touch. I want deep, deep analysis of these pictures and I'm talking running times, missing scenes, director interviews—not just bloody pictures. For example, if you take any version of **DEEP RED** and compared it to the Italian **Profondo Rosso**, you could almost have yourself a whole issue!

After a long search, I finally got hold of Dario Argento's **FOUR FLIES ON GREY VELVET**. There's one thing I don't understand about this movie, and I'm hoping some fellow dog (who's smarter than me) can explain. In the beginning, there's a staged murder to make Roberto (Michael Brandon) feel guilty and frightened. About 19m into the movie, Roberto says to Nina (Mimsy Farmer), who disbelieves him, "I even read about the murder in the paper the next day." What is this? According to the end of the movie, the murder was *staged*! Would a staged murder be reported in the newspaper?

I find it very hard to believe that Dario would make such a mistake. Is my copy missing something?

Jörgen Nilsson
Lund, Sweden

*VIDEO WATCHDOG was never intended to be more of a horror than a fantasy film magazine, or vice versa; we're dedicated to the preservation, analysis, and appreciation of all imaginative filmmaking. It's true that we've been focusing on older films as of late, but I don't think anyone can accuse us of selling out for putting the likes of Laird Cregar, Curtis Harrington, and Reggie Nalder on our covers! We have no specific strategy or agenda other than obsession; our contributors and I simply follow our current interests, which happen to concern older films at the moment, with the occasional arresting exception like **TWIN PEAKS: FIRE WALK WITH ME**. As for wanting to see more European coverage in these pages, sit tight: you can expect to see the pendulum swing back with a vengeance before too long.*

*In answer to your question about **FOUR FLIES ON GREY VELVET**, Yes—your tape copy is missing something that is absent from all known versions... namely, LOGIC!*



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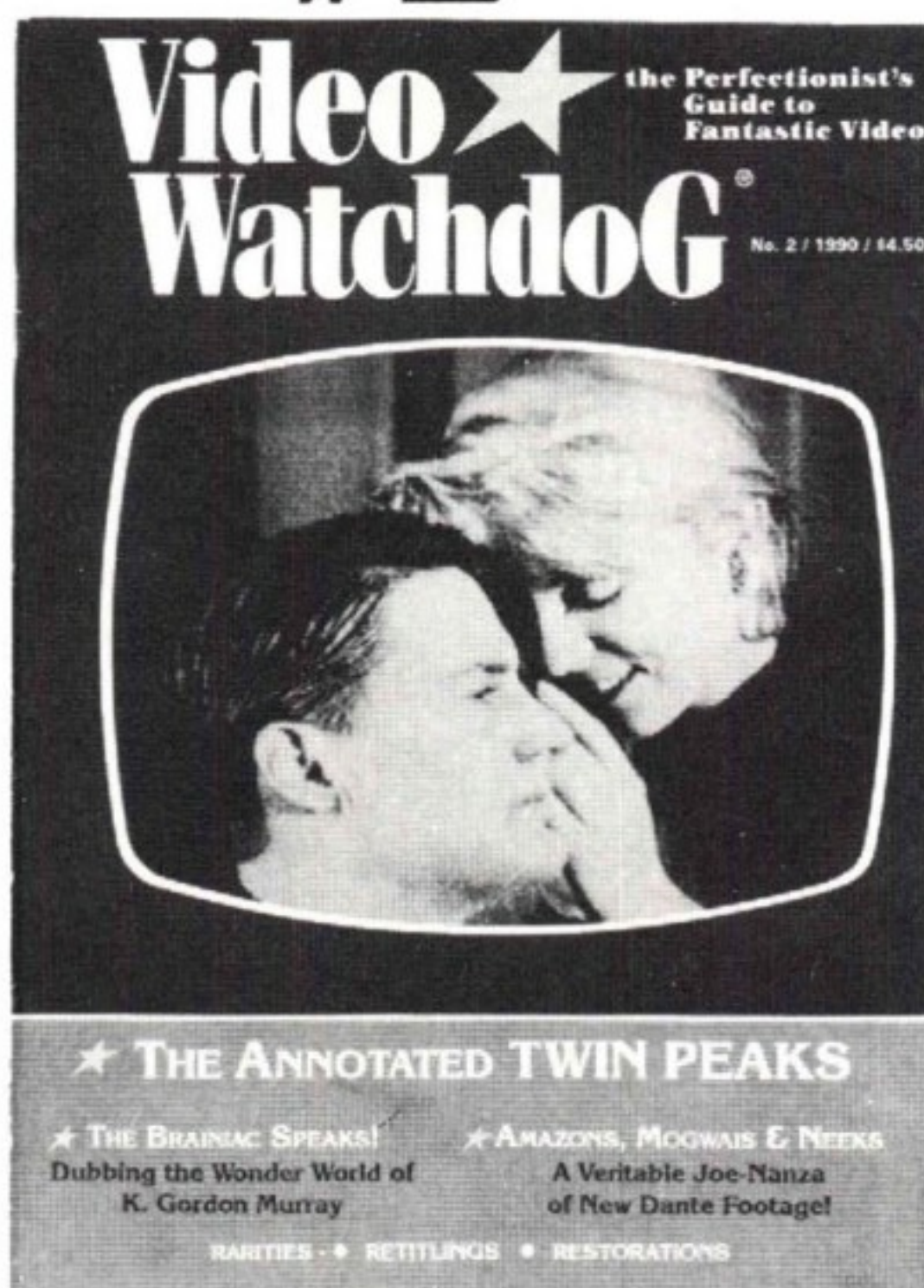
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